

Low Income more Challenging for Women: Social and Economic Problems of Women in Minimum Wage Families

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Abstract

The minimum wage is defined as the lowest payment sufficient to meet an employee's essential needs. Nearly half of the employees in Turkey are paid at the minimum-wage level. Although there is a second working person in many of these families, some rely on a single-income earner who is a minimum-wage worker. In such cases, the only stable income in the household is the minimum wage earned by one family member, which is insufficient to cover the expenses of all family members. In this study, a questionnaire was conducted with 100 women from different families whose sole income was the minimum wage, and 30 of these participants were interviewed. The study revealed that women in minimum-wage families experience the disadvantages of low income and poverty more acutely than men. In particular, women bear the harshest consequences of poverty, as they are often burdened with all domestic responsibilities, including childcare, care for elderly or disabled family members, household chores, and cooking. As a natural consequence of this situation, the social lives of women in low-income families are severely restricted. In almost every case, they lag behind the social lives of men.

Keywords: *Minimum Wage Families, Women, Challenges Faced by Women, Unpaid Labor.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the modern world and under capitalist market conditions, economic income has become a crucial determinant not only of the standard of living of the individual, family, and people but also of the level of prestige that one individual has in society. Similarly, low income is an issue that needs to be addressed separately as individuals living in different segments of society feel it to different degrees.

The economic, social, cultural and psychological effects of low-income levels can be felt differently in rural areas compared to cities. Since life in cities depends more on market conditions and the money economy is much more effective, low-income people living in cities may be more affected by these than people in rural areas.

A similar level of differential impact exists for different genders, especially within the family. Women in low-income families tend to be more affected by this condition than men because the responsibility of preparing three meals a day and serving them to the household falls on the shoulders of women (Öztekin, 2024; Yılmaztürk, 2016; Şener, 2012). This responsibility means that women directly face the limitations of low income or wages daily compared to men.

When the responsibility of taking care of children's daily school-related and educational needs is added to women's food-related responsibilities in the household, the number of women affected by low income and wages increases with a multiplier effect. Accordingly, this study will focus on the economic and social difficulties experienced by women in families whose only regular income is the minimum wage.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Problem, Hypothesis and Purpose of the Study

The dominant traditional-patriarchal perspective in the world and Turkey perceives women as responsible for household chores and solving house-related problems. In this case, women often have to shoulder all the responsibilities in the family. The idea is that the man's job is to work outside the home, and the woman's job is to handle house chores with the "female bird makes the nest" approach, which puts women under an additional burden.

According to the established conception in Turkish culture, a 'housewife' or 'homemaker' woman is responsible for cleaning, organizing, and managing the house, taking care of the children, caring for the elderly, the sick, or the disabled, and finally running the kitchen. A woman who is economically dependent on a man cannot spare a budget for herself from the family income, which is often insufficient, and can only meet all her needs to a minimum extent with the approval of the man. The most important reasons women cannot spare a budget for themselves are the limited general budget, the failure to integrate the general budget into the home, and the lack of the idea that women may have their own special needs. The fact that the labor of women encountering all the difficulties is often invisible, the women do not have a monetary reward, and their labor is undervalued has led to many

personal, spiritual, social and cultural problems for homemakers. Those problems take on a more dramatic dimension in families where the family budget is much more limited, and the only income is the minimum wage. Due to the reasons listed above, in this study, we aimed to identify the problems experienced by women in low-income families with only minimum wage earnings.

The study's hypothesis relates to the research problem's local dimension. In the Black Sea Region in northern Turkey, women are generally known as very hardworking, productive and strong individuals. It is generally thought that Black Sea women can easily overcome economic difficulties within the household and beyond. However, in this study, we argue that women across Anatolia and the country, for whom the Black Sea women serve as a central example, are also negatively affected by insufficient family budgets within the family, and that these processes cause excessive strain on them.

The purpose of our study is to draw attention to the problems experienced by women in low-income families who earn only minimum wage and to raise awareness about their plight. We believe that publishing this study and sharing the findings with a broader audience can serve this purpose.

2.2. Research Method and Data Collection Technique of the Study

We applied a mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods in this research. Creswell (2017) explains a mixed-method study as a type of research that allows data collection, analysis, and interpretation using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Mixed method research uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the research problem from multiple dimensions. The multifaceted and multidimensional nature of the subject required the use of a mixed-method approach (Neuman, 2016). Similarly, the data collection techniques of the research were dual, resembling a mixed method, and a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques, such as survey and interview, were employed in this research. The need to obtain concrete statistical information from the participants in the field through closed-ended questions and the need to obtain interpretive opinions through open-ended questions necessitated this type of dual technique. The information and data source of the research is the declaration of women living in families with minimum wage earnings in Trabzon, an Anatolian city. A survey consisting of both semi-structured questions and five-point Likert-type propositions was applied to the women participating in the research in addition to the conducted interview. The survey and interview questions were developed in a completely original way, as no model study on this subject has been previously made. In Likert-type questions, as can be seen from the study of Dursun and Alniaçık (2019), since the "partially agree" choice cannot be collected in the disagree category, they were considered as positive answers and were evaluated as a low-intensity acceptance, as opposed to the "definitely" emphasized version of the "agree" choice.

The research population is women in families with minimum wage earnings living in Trabzon. The sample group of the research is 100 female participants from one hundred families who are in this population and do not have any special obstacles to represent the whole. In Trabzon, with a population

of 824.000 (DOKA, 2023), the required sample size for 43% of households, according to TURKSTAT (2023) data, is 96 minimum-wage-earning families (Yazıcıoğlu and Erdoğan, 2014, p.50), and this number has been rounded up to 100 for convenience. The participants were selected from the sample group using the random sampling method. Among a hundred people, 30 relatively talkative and interested people were determined as the interview group. Since the research process coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the surveys were conducted face-to-face and the remainder of the interviews were conducted over the phone. The research approval regarding the survey and interview was obtained from the Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the Karadeniz Technical University. During the data collection process, telephone interviews were found to be more efficient because participants felt more comfortable and were able to provide more detailed information during phone conversations conducted without confrontation, which they perceived as private.

3. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Minimum wage

The minimum wage is the lowest daily, weekly, or monthly wage that an employee may be paid. It is considered to be sufficient to meet a person's essential on a daily, weekly or monthly basis at a minimum level (Kurtcebe & Horzum, 2017).

Since the minimum wage is an amount that can cover a person's monthly essential expenses, we may consider it as an exceptional method for paying wages, not actually a principle. In fact, in the Minimum Wage Regulation (Article 4), it is envisaged that the working person, not a couple or a family, can live on the minimum wage. Similarly, the share of the minimum wage rate should be continuously reduced in total employment in a country. However, in practice, those principles tend to be ignored in varying degrees around the world.

3.2. Negative Effects of Economic Disadvantages within the Family on Women

Despite the modernization processes that Turkey has experienced in the last hundred years or so, Turkish women still maintain their disadvantaged position from a social and family perspective. Women work more in relation to family affairs, take on more responsibilities, and benefit less from the opportunities of daily life. This situation is much more striking in low-income families, including those earning minimum wage.

Women in minimum-wage families are more affected by the negative aspects of poverty. In low-income families, women are kept away from the decision-making processes within and around the family. In other words, women from low-income families experience social exclusion (Savcı & Köroğlu, 2022; Karaman, 2019; Çakır, 2002). A Turkish proverb says: "The face of the poor is cold." By working outside, men are deemed to have fulfilled their duties according to the criteria set by the rules of the patriarchal society. The limited budget left to women is neither sufficient for food expenses nor other expenses such as education, health and social life. Under those conditions, women are crushed under

the limited budget, cannot meet their needs, and their social lives come to an end (Kayalar, 2019; Öztürk and Çetin, 2009).

The stabilization of such economic and social problems causes women of low-income families to experience physical, mental, and psychological health problems (Alptekin, 2014; Yanikkerem et al., 2007), and all those processes turn into a vicious circle and surround them like a network, like a cocoon and cause women to be excluded and isolated within and around the family and condemn women to a victimized position.

3.3. Living on Minimum Wage and Housewives in an Anatolian City

Within the scope of the research, we have identified some families with only minimum-wage earnings, concentrated in some neighborhoods in Trabzon. We conducted our research in those neighborhoods; namely, we conducted the surveys and interviews in the neighborhoods named Açıya, Manolya, Papatya, Lavanta, and Leylak. In those neighborhoods, we generally contacted more than one household earning minimum wage in the same building. In many of those neighborhoods, the families live in rental apartments, and women often perform house chores. In the sub-province of Lavanta, we encountered relatively more homeowner families, but we found out that most of those houses or apartments were unplastered, uninsulated, and without any elevators. Among the participants, those who own a home live in more comfortable conditions than those who do not. However, we found that those participants also used expressions similar to the other participants and stated that they had difficulties regarding the house chores they performed during the day. The participants also declared that they were trying to “take care of” the house with a low income by spending time at home all day long and trying to “raise their children”. We understood from those statements that it is not quality but quantity that matters in making a living for the minimum-wage women in Trabzon, and it is not educating but raising and partly surviving that matters when it comes to children.

4. ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1. Making a living for families with only minimum-wage earnings

Table 1. My husband cannot leave me enough money for my domestic needs

	Frequency	Percentage %
Absolutely agree	28	28.0
I agree	23	23.0
Partially agree	30	30.0
Disagree	17	17.0
Absolutely disagree	2	2.0
Total	100	100.0

In the table above, 81% positive response was received for the proposition, which reads as follows: “My husband cannot leave me enough money for domestic needs!”. The percentage of participants who responded negatively was only 19%. We understood that the participants who

responded negatively thought that the minimum wage that men received was insufficient by responding as follows: “If he had money, he would quit, he is working for his home, what else will he do?” Additionally, we found out that among the participants who responded negatively by 19%, 10 participants received monetary assistance from their families, 11 participants had 1 or 2 children, 5 participants worked extra jobs, 8 participants prepared some food items at home instead of buying them from the market, and 2 participants received monetary assistance from the government. Probably due to these reasons, the grievance of the 19 people in question seems to have become a little less severe, and instead of complaining directly, they have resorted to “reasoning”. Studies indicate that minimum-wage families cannot allocate sufficient money for food. For example, in the study conducted by Kocakahya (2007), among those who stated that they could not buy enough food items, red meat, and the like, the percentage of those who declared that they could not buy the products was 9%. However, according to the same study, 84.1% of minimum-wage earners thought they had a health problem due to malnutrition.

Table 2. The needs of the house and the children are on me

	Frequency	Percentage %
Absolutely agree	26	26.0
I agree	24	24.0
Partially Agree	19	19.0
Disagree	26	26.0
Absolutely disagree	5	5.0.0
Total	100	100.0

The positive responses to the proposition of “The needs of the house and the children are left to me!” constitute 69%. This percentage coincides with the following statements of the participants in the interviews: P9: “I would like to leave a future for my children. I have a disabled daughter; I wish she were normal. I have difficulty caring for her; I wish I could take care of her. I have difficulty in taking care of my child along with the house chores.” P14: “I devoted myself to my children. We are in a disadvantaged position and a difficult situation. What can I say? I am in a difficult situation. P16: “When the children want something, they cannot tell their father; they tell me, so I mediate between my husband and the children. I cannot meet the needs of the children.” P17: “There were times when I did not turn on the heater so I could save some money and use it for my children’s education, and they could go to private supplementary courses and buy their books with the money I saved. If they do not study, it means that I am done.” On the other hand, the percentage of those who responded negatively to the proposition is 31%. This situation may be based on the internalization of those responsibilities and perceiving it as their duty to meet their children’s needs by the women who expressed this opinion.

Table 3. I Face the Difficulties that We Experience in Meeting Our Needs More than My Husband!

	Frequency	Percentage %
Absolutely agree	20	20.0
I agree	24	24.0
Partially Agree	11	11.0
Disagree	36	36.0
Absolutely disagree	9	9.0
Total	100	100.0

The percentage of those who responded positively to the statement, “I face the difficulties that we face in meeting our needs more than my husband!” was 55%, while the percentage of those who responded negatively was 45%. Most women thought they had to deal with most of the problems alone. On the other hand, the fact that women worked for their own families and did not expect anything in return normalizes the invisibility of the labor performed by women. Although it cannot be said that there is an absolute, systematic relationship between poverty and gender, Arıkan found out that as women become poorer, they become more disadvantaged in the family and their marital relations (Arıkan, 2002). It was also observed that the fact that women are a segment of society more affected by low-income levels, minimum wage and poverty in the world, as in Turkey, is fueled by the perception and understanding of gender. It was also found that low income, minimum wage or varying degrees of poverty negatively affected women more than men due to the gender roles of women (for the example studies in this matter, see Lustig & McLeod, 1996; Saget, 2001; Devereux, 2005). The participants of this study expressed this matter in the interviews as follows: P20: “This is my second marriage. I have never seen a man taking responsibility properly. In this house, there is a man and a woman, and my husband is not the one who takes responsibility. I do every task in the house.” This tendency towards irresponsibility in Turkish society in general and in the minimum-wage families, in particular, may mean that the women in the relevant families cease to be women; they become relatively masculine with the masculine roles they assume, and they cannot even experience their femininity.

Table 4. In my opinion, the addressee of the proverb “Poverty is the Shirt of Nessus” is mostly women

	Frequency	Percentage %
Absolutely agree	23	23.0
I agree	28	28.0
Partially Agree	15	15.0
Disagree	27	27.0
Absolutely disagree	7	7.0
Total	100	100.0

The percentage of those who responded positively to the preposition, “In my opinion, the addressee of the proverb “Poverty is a shirt of fire” is mostly women!” was 66%. From the responses, we understood that women were more severely affected by the disadvantages of poverty. All responsibilities attributed to women due to the gender roles negatively affect women. However, these roles may affect women in high-income and low-income families differently.

Women experience and evaluate poverty and wealth more than men do. The participants expressed the following statements in the interviews: P9: “I envy those with high incomes very much. If I want to do something, my resources are always inadequate. But they have the chance to use their wealth for their needs.” On the other hand, the rate of those who responded negatively to the proposition was 34%. While we found out that the majority of the participants who gave negative responses did not pay rent and received monetary assistance from their families or the government, the relatively low number of children and persons in those families was actually noteworthy. When the previously mentioned conservative* concerns come into play, it becomes understandable that about one-third of the answers turned out to be in the negative direction.

4.2. Women in Minimum-Wage Families Have to Take Financial Responsibility

Table 5. The Economic Inadequacy Pushes Me to Work More

	Frequency	Percentage %
Absolutely I agree	14	14.0
I agree	13	13.0
Partially Agree	5	5.0
Disagree	34	34.0
Absolutely disagree	34	34.0
Total	100	100.0

The percentage of the positive responses for the proposition of “The economic inadequacies push me to work more!” was 32%. The fact that the participants who responded positively had to do additional work was expressed in the interviews as follows: P23: “Now I have to work. We borrowed money from our relatives to buy a house. The house we lived in belonged to my father. When they told us to leave, we had to buy a house.” P27: “I’m doing more than compromising my femininity, I’m compromising my humanity. I’m going to wipe the stairs; I’m going to do cleaning.” P28: “I have to do extra work. We couldn’t afford to pay our debts.” P30: “I have to sacrifice myself all the time, I would work if I can find a job, but nobody employs women. I have been looking for a job for two years.” We found out that the women in families trying to survive on minimum wage were forced to work irregular jobs and earn income that supported the minimum wage due to economic difficulties. However, the women also stated that society did not give jobs to women who wanted to work by making sacrifices out of their “femininity” or even “humanity”. Due to the traditional conception of gender, the patriarchal society does not give jobs to female job seekers. The patriarchal society does this either because it does not think that the job suits women, or it thinks that working women will create some ethical issues, or it does not want women to become stronger in society. Regardless of the reason why the patriarchal society does not give jobs to women, this situation has the effect of increasing the victimization of women. In

* In the article, the concept of conservatism, mentions in two instances, is used not in its political sense, but in its social, cultural, and psychological contexts.

some studies (Dedeoğlu, 2000), in-depth interviews were conducted with women who defined themselves as housewives, and when they were asked whether they had any well-paying jobs recently, it was found out that most women worked as farmhands, vegetable vendors, tailors, and day laborers. This data confirms the findings of our study. Under normal circumstances, a family is expected to be able to make ends meet with one person working in the household. However, we observed that this opportunity does not exist in minimum-wage families and women tend to work various jobs to support the family budget.

Table 6. I Have to Produce Some Items at Home Instead of Buying them from the Market!

	Frequency	Percentage %
Absolutely I agree	18	18.0
I agree	31	31.0
Partially agree	13	13.0
Disagree	17	17.0
Absolutely disagree	21	21.0
Total	100	100.0

The percentage of those who responded positively to the proposition “I have to produce some items at home instead of buying them from the market” was 62%. The reason for such a positive response is that the women are held responsible for such matters. In their social circles, women are seen to encourage each other with questions such as “What did you do to prepare for the winter?”, “Did you dry peppers this year?” We understood that the most important reason for this situation is that women have internalized these tasks and perceived them as their primary duties. In his study, Kocakahya (2007) found out that pickles (96%), canned foods (83.7%), tomato paste (79.7%), jam-marmalade (79%) and pickled grape leaves (67%) came first among the foods prepared by the minimum wage individuals at home. Freezing vegetables and fruits was performed by 30.1% and drying was performed by 29% of the individuals. Bulgur and roasted meat (25.4%) were among the least prepared foods. Similarly, Çiçek et al. (2005), in their study, found that the foods most prepared by low-income homemakers at home were pickles (87.5%), jam-marmalade (83.3%), tomato paste (74.3%) and noodles-pasta (73.6%). P20, one of the interviewed participants, stated that the economic difficulties prevented her from going to the market by saying: “When I have money, I go to the market, but this is very rare.” In this case, what needs to be done is to produce as many food items at home as possible. While this type of food preparation and stocking at home is more feasible in rural areas and villages, carrying out these activities in the cities is extremely difficult, arduous and heavy for women.

4.3. In Minimum-Wage Families, Women May Become the “Receiving Hand”

Table 7. My husband does not pay attention to the kitchen expenses but expects to eat the best meal!

	Frequency	Percentage %
Absolutely agree	9	9.0
I agree	22	22.0
Partially agree	14	14.0
Disagree	39	39.0
Absolutely disagree	16	16.0
Total	100	100.0

The percentage of the participants who positively responded to the proposition, “My husband does not pay attention to the kitchen expenses but expects to eat the best meal!” was 45%. This percentage is extremely high and shows that nearly half of the women in minimum-wage families try to meet their kitchen needs without the active contribution of their husbands. As a matter of fact, this issue was brought up in the interviews. One of them, P26, expressed her feelings and the difficulty of her situation as follows: “My husband works until the evening, comes home in the evening, he does not know anything, he does not ask what was given, what was paid, or what kind of problems took place at home whether something was broken, or an emergency happened. Having his food in front of him on the table is enough for him.” In other words, it is women, not men, who are “cracking” and “exploding”, in the women’s own words, and shouldering all the responsibility in this field, with expressions in line with the literature, in order to earn a living and set the table for the household at home.

Table 8. I Have to Get Assistance from My Family!

	Frequency	Percentage %
Absolutely agree	13	13.0
I agree	19	19.0
Partially agree	13	13.0
Disagree	26	26.0
Absolutely disagree	29	29.0
Total	100	100.0

45% of the participants responded positively to the proposition, “I have to get assistance from my family.” We found out that a significant part of this assistance was relatively in the form of durable food items such as canned foods, pickles, jams and dried fruits, and this assistance could also be in the form of direct cash assistance. On the other hand, the percentage of those who responded negatively to this proposition was 55%. P1, one of the women who did not receive help from her family, responded: “My husband would not accept such a thing.” As we may understand from the data obtained, it is clear that the family is in need; women volunteer to receive this type of assistance from their own families, but men do not generally allow it. Again, as far as we understand from the data, men are largely unaware of the extent of the difficulty of making ends meet at home or they consciously avoid the subject matter. Since the burden falls mainly on women’s shoulders, men can more easily engage in this type of “cheap

ingratitude” attitude, so to speak. However, the woman (P1), who was not allowed by her husband to get assistance from her family, was the same woman who had to collect bruised and half-rotten vegetables and fruits from the market. Such approaches are the clearest example of the situation in which a crude form of patriarchy puts women in low-income families.

4.4. Social Problems of Women in Minimum-Wage Families

Table 9. I Had to Make Sacrifices by Ignoring Many of My Personal Needs!

	Frequency	Percentage %
Absolutely agree	68	68.0
I agree	17	17.0
Partially agree	8	8.0
Disagree	6	6.0
Absolutely disagree	1	1.0
Total	100	100.0

93% of the participants responded positively to the proposition, “I had to make sacrifices by ignoring many of my personal needs.” P5, one of the participants who responded positively, stated: “Of course, sometimes I have to compromise myself. I do men’s work as much as I can, renovations in the house, and the like.” P14: “I devoted myself to my children. We are in a disadvantaged and difficult situation.” P8: “I have to constantly think about supporting the family, being a woman is difficult. Women with high income levels can travel a lot, but I can’t.” P15: “I feel very bad. I don’t feel like a woman. I let myself go. I was all about my children. If we had a little bit more income, maybe this wouldn’t have happened.” P18: “Before marriage, I was doing most of the work that a man did. I said that if I got married, I would be at peace, I know that I am a woman, but that was not the case, of course, I had to make more sacrifices.” P21: “I compromise myself too much. I struggle both in and out of home. My husband is not someone who will put himself in trouble, so I don’t care about the fact that I am a woman, I keep working.” P23: “There is no femininity left, you can’t take care of yourself, you can’t buy clothes, you can’t go shopping for yourself. The money you earn only goes into debt and then ends up paying for food for the little kids.” P27: “I am no longer compromising my femininity; I am compromising my humanity. I go and wipe the stairs; I go and do cleaning. I see something I want, but I say, I can’t spend that money now, this is not the time, now I have this and that debt.” We understand that she was crushed under the mentality of poverty, and she did not experience any comfort both in her father’s house and her own house. The data coincide with the findings of other studies in the literature (Delenay, 1987; Dedeoğlu, 2000). On the other hand, we found out that 9 women out of the 9% of participants who responded negatively to this proposition had 3 or fewer children and they did not live with a dependent elder in the family. It is also an important finding that some participants who answered negatively to the proposition above-received help from their families. The situation can become much

more understandable considering the possibility that the house they live in was not rented but owned, and the fact that they received assistance from the government and their relatives but failed to state them clearly and they had conservative feelings and thoughts.

Table 10. I feel embarrassed about my environment, relatives and friends!

	Frequency	Percentage %
Absolutely agree	15	15.0
I agree	15	15.0
Partially agree	16	16.0
Disagree	27	27.0
Absolutely disagree	27	27.0
Total	100	100.0

The percentage of those who responded positively to the proposition of “I feel embarrassed about my environment, relatives and friends” was 46%. In other words, at least a quarter of women are embarrassed by their social environment. This factor directly and negatively affects their participation in social activities. All of these are processes that can negatively reflect on the functioning of a society. The participants expressed this situation verbally in the interviews: P14: “We are in a disadvantaged and difficult situation. I’m in trouble, what can I say? It makes you feel ashamed. “I can’t even enter a social environment.” P27: “I was getting help from the district headman, but now they don’t give me any help. I am reluctant to accept guests. My friends came over a few times and I couldn’t find anything to offer them. They understand the situation and don’t want to come to my house anymore.”

On the other hand, most women do not accept their embarrassment because they try not to show their neediness as much as possible. One participant (P2) expressed this situation in the interviews: “I am in a needy situation, but I cannot tell anyone. I withdrew and I don’t express it.”

4.5. Children’s Educational Expenses and Problems Increase the Burden of Women

Table 11. We Can’t Pay Children’s School Fees!

	Frequency	Percentage %
No dues/ No Answer	44	44.0
Absolutely agree	11	11.0
I agree	24	24.0
Partially agree	10	10.0
Disagree	7	7.0
Absolutely disagree	4	4.0
Total	100	100.0

Regarding the proposition, “We cannot pay the school fees of our children!”, 44 participating women declared that there were no school fees in their children’s schools and actually left this proposition unanswered. The fact that this number is so high is at least suspicious because we may think that women did not express this situation and preferred to “experience it inside”. As a matter of fact, there is a significant group of participants who responded positively to this proposition by 45% and they declared that they could not pay their children’s school fees. From our personal experience, we also know that such payments do not officially exist. However, the schools unofficially request the parents to make those payments in almost every school in varying forms and amounts. Although a minority of the group of 44 women probably did not encounter such a request for dues, we believe that most of them actually did, and they were hesitant to express this situation. Despite everything, 45% of the participants responded positively to this proposition and declared that they did not have enough money to pay their children’s school fees. These dues are covered in different ways. One of them is that the neighborhood headman pays such dues instead of the parents. As a matter of fact, one participant (P27) explained this situation as follows: “Thanks to the headman, the school needs are provided to us, they ask for dues and other fees, I cannot pay them, instead I spend the money on other things.” Another practice is that the dues that these families have to pay are distributed among the parents of other children in the class.

We may think that the 11% of women who responded negatively to this proposition and declared that they could pay their children’s school fees provided this answer for the rational and irrational reasons mentioned before.

Table 12. My husband does not attend the parent-teacher conferences at school; he wants me to attend as a parent!

	Frequency	Percentage %
No Answer	36	36.0
Absolutely agree	27	27.0
I agree	21	21.0
Partially agree	9	9.0
Disagree	4	4.0
Absolutely disagree	3	3.0
Total	100	100.0

Thirty-six people did not respond to the proposition, “My husband does not go to the parent-teacher conferences at school and wants me to attend as a parent.” We may assume that some of the members of this group do not have children, those children do not go to school yet, or some of their children graduated from school. Only 7% of the remaining majority responded negatively and stated that their husbands went to the parent-teacher conference. However, 57% of the participants responded positively to this proposition and stated that they went to school for the parent-teacher conference at their children’s schools. In fact, when 36 people who do not have school-age children are excluded, the

percentage reaches 89% of the remaining 64 persons. Even if this is the case in all income groups, it should be taken into account that the reasons may differ, and the voluntary/compulsory status may also vary. Women in minimum-wage families reluctantly attend those conferences because rather than facing financial difficulties alone, men leave this obligation to women. However, we may think that either spouse should attend the parent-teacher conferences together, or they should go in turns, or mostly men should go because in Anatolia, while women are generally not allowed to go out of the house to travel, it is contradictory that women are allowed to go to school for parent-teacher conferences, or even asked to do so. This contradiction can be explained by the fact that men avoid these conferences where financial issues may be brought to the agenda, leaving this responsibility on women's shoulders. As a matter of fact, for families with relatively higher incomes, it is possible for spouses to attend parent-teacher meetings together or in turn. The fact that women in low-income families perform this task is a difference that can be explained entirely by financial means, and even here, it is women who have to face the disadvantages of poverty.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A minimum wage is a wage that can meet the essential needs of an employee for one day. While the minimum wage needs to be an exception, it has a higher application rate than it should in many countries and tends to turn into the average wage in our country. Spreading the minimum wage to the base in this way causes poverty to spread and get acculturated in this segment of society. It should not be forgotten that one day, poverty can be minimized, but rehabilitating the culture of poverty may require a much longer time.

On the other hand, while the minimum wage is designed as a wage that is capable of covering a person's essential expenses at the minimum level, in an important segment of society, the family's only income consists of the minimum wage. Most of these families have two, three, or more people in the household. As the number of people in the household increases, the difficulty of making ends meet increases proportionally. This problem becomes much more evident, especially in cases where the house is not owned but rented, representing a significant expense item in the family's budget.

As the findings of this study reveal, poverty is a serious situation in families trying to survive on a single minimum wage. However, we have observed that the spouses affected by poverty in these families are more likely to be women rather than men. We may say that the minimum wage and poverty affect women more than men and it mostly victimizes women. Almost all the women in the sample group of this study who try to survive on the minimum wage emphasized the inadequacy of the minimum wage in supporting their families. This difficulty affected women in two main ways. The first is in the form of economic distress or financial difficulties. Almost all participating women used definite statements such as "we cannot make ends meet" or "we cannot afford food and children's educational expenses".

However, the problems experienced by women in families trying to make ends meet on minimum wage, which need to be emphasized more than economic problems, are social. Women from minimum-wage families cannot socialize, cannot participate in society, and are forced to neglect themselves. As a result, they become isolated and alienated from society, excluded from the decision-making processes and society, and may be discriminated against and ignored. As the number of minimum wage families in the country increases, the number and rate of women victimized by the minimum wage also increases. This unsustainable situation clearly highlights the urgent need for comprehensive social and economic interventions.

The general public perceives that Black Sea women are powerful, astute, and can overcome all difficulties. Based on this perception, there is an unnamed memorization and tendency that the problems of women from the Black Sea region in general and Trabzon in particular can be ignored. However, regional women are like all others and have economic and social needs. Their strength and resilience should not become an excuse to ignore their problems forever. It should be questioned once again how women who cannot socialize and realize themselves in this sense can raise children, who are the future of a country, in a better spiritual and physical manner. Both the public and public institutions should address this problem seriously. In fact, money and financial means can be seen as nothing on their own, but social competence cannot be achieved without a minimum level of financial means. Actually, the prerequisite for a mother to raise good children is not primarily money and financial means, but a minimum level of financial means is fundamental in this sense. Minimum financial conditions are indispensable for children to be raised with minimum social satisfaction. In this sense, the situation of women as mothers is extremely fragile and noteworthy. Since child rearing is seen as a responsibility of women rather than men and of mothers rather than fathers, the presence or absence of financial means is an issue primarily faced by women. In this sense, the difficult conditions experienced by women are worth paying more attention to at the individual, social and institutional levels so that children in minimum-wage families can develop better spiritually and physically. It should be questioned once again how women who cannot socialize and realize themselves in this sense can raise children, who are the future of a country, more healthily. Both the public and public institutions should address this problem in depth.

If the expression is correct and no pun intended, we may say that women enjoy the pleasures of life and suffer the pain. Conversely, men are actors who devote themselves to work and are not interested in anything else. For men, going to work and working is equivalent to fulfilling their family responsibilities. For wealthy men, taking care of family members, spouses and children is not a priority. Similarly, the situation is not very different for male minimum-wage earners. For them, simply being able to work is sufficient, while whether the household needs are fully met becomes a secondary concern. This burden predominantly falls on women.

We argue that, just as it is unique for women to display wealth on themselves in their homes and lives, it is also their responsibility to experience poverty daily and practically. Women are the main actors of both socio-economic extremes in social life. Although the first situation can be experienced optionally, the second situation is not a choice but a wholly imposed and unpleasant obligation. We may also argue that half of the country's women are in this situation. The situation will likely evolve into acculturation and spread further into future generations. A solution must be produced, and the problem must urgently be rehabilitated.

Ethics committee approval for the study was obtained from the Karadeniz Technical University Ethics Committee on February 24, 2020, with document number 82554930-449.

The authors declare that the study was conducted in accordance with research and publication ethics.

The authors confirm that no part of the study was generated, either wholly or in part, using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools.

The authors affirm that there are no financial conflicts of interest involving any institution, organization, or individual associated with this article. Additionally, there are no conflicts of interest among the authors.

The authors declare that the contribution rate of each author is as follows: First Author: 30%, Second Author: 25%, Third Author: 25%, Fourth Author: 10%, Fifth Author: 10%.

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