

## Labor Market Reflections Of Covid-19 Pandemic:

### A Global Investigation Specific To Income Groups And Vulnerable Workers

H. Işıl ALKAN<sup>1</sup>

Bora ALKAN<sup>2</sup>

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#### Abstract

The Covid 19 pandemic, which started in Wuhan, China in November 2019 and then spread rapidly all over the world, caused the death of millions of people, stagnation in the global economy, and a rare economic conjuncture by creating both demand and supply shocks. The pandemic has affected world economies and deeply affected the labor markets on a global scale. Production in many sectors has decreased significantly, and in some sectors, it has come to a standstill. As a result, unemployment rates and employment losses have increased and employment patterns have changed. The main objective of this study is to investigate the effects of the pandemic on labor markets around the world in terms of both income groups and vulnerable labor based on the extensive literature and ILO&IMF database. According to the findings, the macroeconomic structures of the countries have differentiated their levels of being affected by the crisis, while unemployment and employment losses were felt sharply in middle and low-income countries. Moreover, the impacts of the pandemic on disadvantaged groups have been harsh, women, youth, migrant, and child labor have been affected in different ways by the pandemic. Due to the pandemic, women had difficulty in staying in the labor market, young people were left out of the labor market and NEET rates increased, migrant workers also experienced significant employment losses, the pandemic has also increased child labor globally.

**Keywords:** Covid 19 pandemic, labor markets, unemployment, vulnerable workers.

### Covid-19 Pandemisinin İşgücü Piyasalarına Yansımaları: Gelir Grupları ve Kırılgan İşgücü Üzerinde Bir İrdeleme

#### Öz

Kasım 2019'da Çin'in Wuhan kentinde başlayan ve daha sonra hızla tüm dünyaya yayılan Covid 19 pandemisi, milyonlarca insanın ölümüne ve küresel ekonomide durgunluğa neden olmuş, hem talep hem de arz şokları yaratarak nadir görülecek bir ekonomik konjonktür oluşturmuştur. Pandemi dünya ekonomilerini ve küresel ölçekte işgücü piyasalarını derinden etkilemiştir. Pek çok sektörde üretim önemli ölçüde azalmış, kimi sektörlerde durma noktasına gelmiştir. Bunun sonucunda, işsizlik oranları ve istihdam kayıpları artmış, istihdam örüntüleri değişmiştir. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, kapsamlı literatüre ve ILO&IMF veritabanına dayanarak pandeminin dünyada işgücü piyasaları üzerindeki etkilerini hem gelir grupları hem de kırılgan işgücü detayında araştırmaktır. Bulgulara göre, ülkelerin makroekonomik yapıları sözkonusu krizden etkilenme düzeylerini farklılaştırmış, orta ve düşük gelirli ülkelerde işsizlik ve istihdam kayıpları keskinleşmiştir. Ayrıca pandeminin dezavantajlı gruplar üzerindeki etkileri sert olmuş, kadın, genç, göçmen ve çocuk emeği pandemiden farklı şekillerde etkilenmiştir. Pandemi nedeniyle kadınlar işgücü piyasasında kalmakta zorlanmış, gençler işgücü piyasasının dışına itilmiş, NEET oranları artmış, göçmen işçiler önemli istihdam kayıplarına uğramıştır, pandemi küresel düzeyde çocuk işçiliğini de artırmıştır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Covid 19 pandemisi, işgücü piyasaları, işsizlik, kırılgan işgücü.

<sup>1</sup> Doç Dr., Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi, İİBF, İktisat Bölümü, [isilalkan@omu.edu.tr](mailto:isilalkan@omu.edu.tr),  
ORCID: 0000-0002-1437-1967

<sup>2</sup> Öğr. Gör., Terme Meslek Yüksekokulu, Muhasebe ve Vergi Bölümü, [bora.alkan@omu.edu.tr](mailto:bora.alkan@omu.edu.tr),  
ORCID: 0000-0002-4231-6383

## **Introduction**

Epidemics that have occurred in certain periods throughout history have significantly transformed both the social structure and the economic structure of the world. Justinian's Plague, Black Death, Columbus Epidemic, and Spanish Flu were among the most devastating of these epidemics and brought significant losses with them. Related epidemics caused both significant declines in population and changes in the economic structure. For example, in the Middle Ages, the European population not only decreased by about a quarter due to the Black Death, but also wages increased, and many institutional changes were experienced, especially in the rural areas where a significant part of the population lived. While this situation paved the way for the commercialization of agriculture in the rural, manufacturing industry and trade developed in the urban area. Moreover, interest rates decreased, rural industries began to emerge, and labor-saving technologies were introduced. The consequences of the mentioned impacts have not been the same throughout Europe. For example, per capita income and real wages were higher in northwestern Europe than in southern Europe, due to scarce labor and high wages. Between 1350 and 1600, wages for unskilled workers rose significantly in northwestern Europe compared to southern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean (Pamuk, 2007, pp. 312-313).

The Covid-19 pandemic, which emerged in Wuhan, China in November 2019, spread to different continents in the first months of 2020, and was described as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization in March 2020, is the biggest health crisis of the 21st century. The mentioned pandemic has caused the death of millions of people and caused various health problems for millions of people. The pandemic also put the health system under a great burden throughout the world, and the health system has collapsed in many countries. The collapse of health systems in various countries has increased the severity of the situation. In connection with these problems, the economic functioning all over the world has come to a deadlock, and activities in many sectors have stopped. Home quarantine practices have become widespread, some sectors have switched to the remote working system, and the education sector has turned to distance education. Therefore, the relevant crisis has gone beyond being a health crisis. The relevant crisis is a two-sided economic crisis, both supply and demand-side. While the halt of production in some sectors and the slowdown in others caused a supply-side crisis in the economy, the notable decrease in demand and the decrease in consumption expenditures with the quarantine process created a demand-side crisis. Due to the bilateral crisis, the economies

of many countries have stalled. The stagnation in the economies directly affected the labour markets, many markets have transformed significantly and many problems related to the labour force, especially the loss of employment and income, emerged. This study aims to reveal the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic on labor markets globally, examine the relevant effects in detail by income groups and investigate the impacts on disadvantaged groups (female labour, youth labour and child labour). In this framework, the study also tries to analyze these effects using a gender lens as the relevant crisis did not affect everyone equally, especially in the developing world.

### 1. An Overview Of The Effects Of The Covid 19 Pandemic By Income Groups

Although the Covid 19 pandemic has affected the global macroeconomic structure, the economic structures of all countries have not been affected to the same extent by the pandemic. To reduce the negative effects of the epidemic on the economy and society, developed and developing countries have announced fiscal support packages. The table below (Table 1) presents the fiscal measures of countries from January 2020 to October 2021. As can be seen, developed countries provided more support than the developing ones.

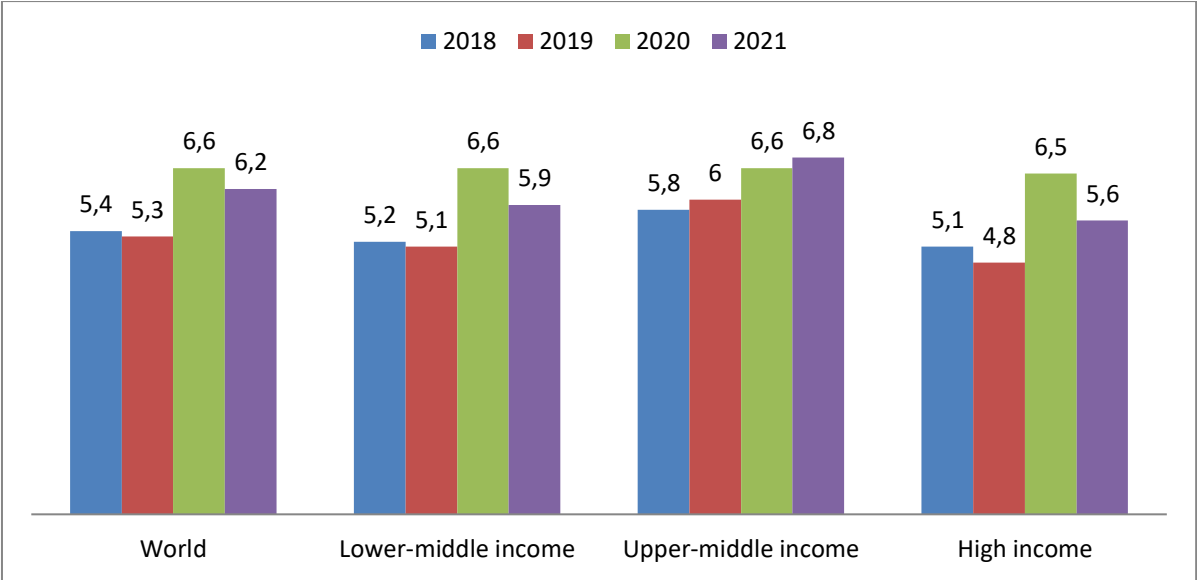
**Table 1-Fiscal Measures of Various Countries After Covid 19 Pandemic From January 2020 to October 2021**

	Additional spending or foregone revenues		Liquidity support	
	USD Billion	Percent of 2020 GDP	USD Billion	Percent of 2020 GDP
Canada	262	15,9	65	4
Germany	589	15,3	1058	27,8
Japan	844	16,7	1429	28,3
United Kingdom	522	19,3	453	16,7
United States	5328	25,5	510	2,4
China	711	4,8	193	1,3
India	109	4,1	166	6,2
Russia	74	5,0	22	1,5
Turkey	25	3,5	69	9,6
Brazil	133	9,2	89	6,2

Source: IMF, 2022

Although these measures aimed to alleviate the economic costs of the epidemic, the contraction caused by the epidemic on both the supply and demand sides has reduced the labour force participation rate, increased unemployment and significantly reduced working hours even in high-income countries (Graph 1 and 2). Labour force participation rate in the world for 15+age as of 2019, 2020 and 2021 is respectively 60,5%, 58,6%, and 59% (ILOSTAT, 2022).

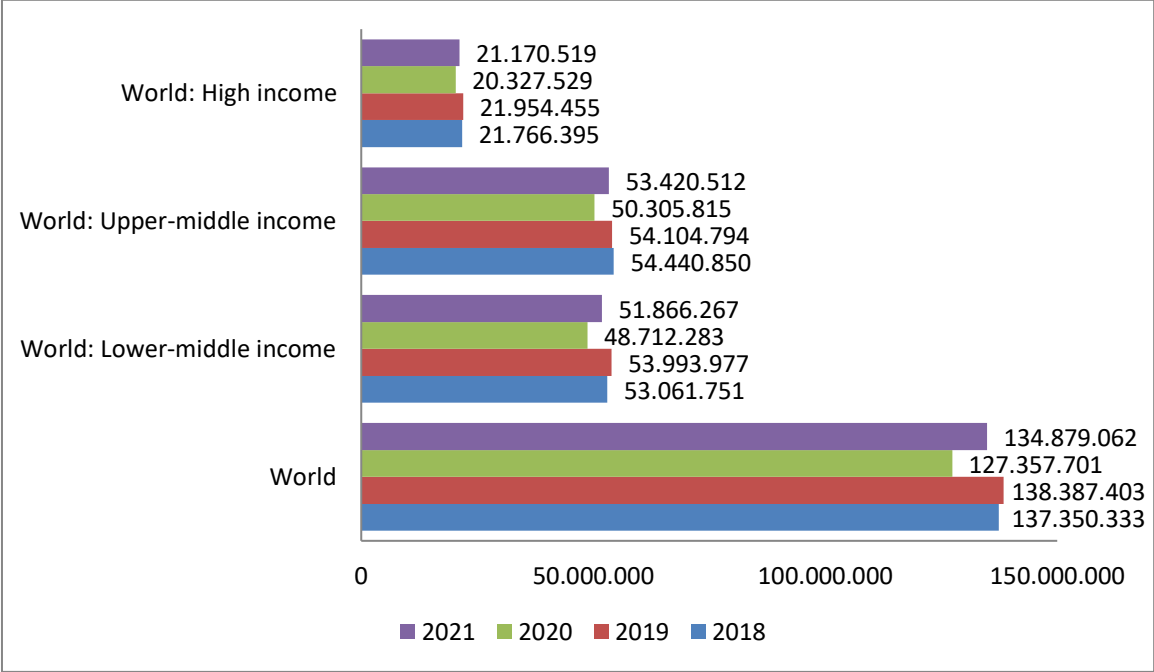
**Graph 1-Unemployment rates before and after Covid 19 pandemic, %**



Source: ILOSTAT, 2022

The restrictions that came into force due to the Covid crisis reduced production in many sectors, especially the services sector was adversely affected. Working hours decreased significantly and job losses increased in these sectors. Since the share of the services sector in employment has increased significantly in recent decades all over the world, countries whose economy is largely dependent on the services sector have been deeply affected by this situation. Job losses have reached striking dimensions, especially in countries with high informal employment and high levels of unprotected employment in the services sector (ILO, 2020a, p.3). According to the ILO database, working hours lost due to the Covid-19 crisis in the world is 8,9% in 2020 and 4,3% in 2021 (ILOSTAT, 2022).

**Graph 2- Total weekly hours worked of employed persons, 2018-2021**



Source: ILOSTAT, 2022

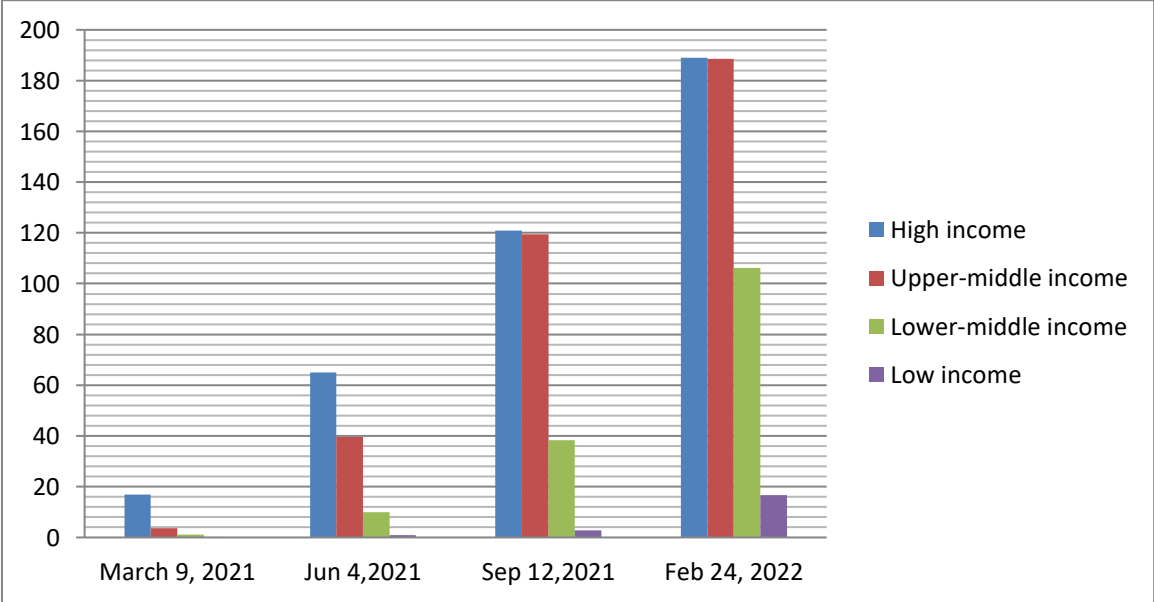
As can be seen in Graph 2, working hours have decreased significantly in low- and middle-income countries. There are also losses in working hours in high-income countries, but the associated loss is much higher in low- and middle-income countries.

The restrictions imposed due to Covid 19 have significantly affected the majority of the workforce all over the world. Those who were most affected among the relevant workforce were those who were employed informally. The aforementioned segment was the segment that felt the effects of the crisis most rapidly and severely due to their lack of social security. Informal workers were the segment that could be pushed out of the labor market in the fastest way due to the contraction in production, and the absence of social security caused this segment to be unable to benefit from benefits such as unemployment insurance. Therefore, millions of informally employed workers in the world have faced both loss of income and poverty. According to ILO, 5 billion workers worldwide were affected by full-time or partial lockdown measures and these measures have had a much more profound impact on 1.6 billion informal workers, mostly in sectors where women are concentrated (ILO, 2020b) (ILO, 2020c). In the first month of the crisis, it was estimated that the incomes of informal workers decreased by 60% globally. When analyzed regionally, it was determined that this decrease was the highest in Africa and Latin America (81%) (ILO, 2020b). For millions of informal workers, staying at home has meant losing their jobs and livelihoods. In this case, the dilemma of "dying from

hunger or dying from the virus" has also been a dilemma faced by informal workers. Considering that 2 billion people earned their living from the informal economy in 2020 and this figure constitutes 62% of the workers worldwide, the striking dimensions of informal employment around the world are revealed. Informal employment is largely concentrated in developing countries. While the informal employment rate in total employment in low-income countries is 90%, it is 67% in middle-income countries and 18% in high-income countries. In low- and middle-income countries, women's informal employment is more intense than men's (ILO, 2020c).

One of the factors that had a significant impact on the labour market during the pandemic period was the vaccination rates of countries a factor that accelerated the return to work. With the help of vaccination campaigns, the fight against the virus has become easier and the re-activation of many sectors has accelerated. However, this was mostly true for developed countries as vaccination rates varied widely in high-income, middle-income and low-income countries (ILO, 2021a).

**Graph 3- Covid 19 vaccine doses administered per 100 people, by income group**



Source: OWID, 2022

The pandemic has also significantly transformed the way of work. To reduce face-to-face interaction, remote work has become widespread, and working from home has become a valid working style, especially for white-collar workers all over the world. While remote work was a form of work initially applied for health concerns, over time employers realized that they could significantly reduce their costs by remote work, and for some lines of business, remote

work became permanent. By facilitating telework, millions of employees participate to employment by teleworking in the world. In France, Australia and the United Kingdom, 47% of employees worked remotely during lockdowns in 2020. Even in Japan, which has not resorted to nationwide lockdown, the rate of teleworking increased from 10% in December 2019 to 28% in May 2020. Teleworking has become widespread in heavily digitized industries, information and communication services, and financial services. Teleworking rates are higher in large companies than in small companies, and telework of highly skilled workforce is much more common (OECD, 2022, p. 2). While 7.9% of the world's workforce (approximately 260 million employees) worked from home before the pandemic, 17.4% of the global employment, that is, 557 million employees, worked from home after the pandemic (ILO, 2021d). It should also be taken into account that working from home and flexible working forms, which have become widespread with Covid 19, increase inequalities and vulnerability in working life.

### **3. Effects On Disadvantaged Groups: Female Labour, Youth Labour and Child Labour**

Covid 19 has greatly affected disadvantaged groups all over the world. Since this group was the group that had the most difficulty in being included in the workforce before the pandemic, it was significantly excluded from the labor market with the pandemic. The effects of the pandemic on women, youth, and child labor are different.

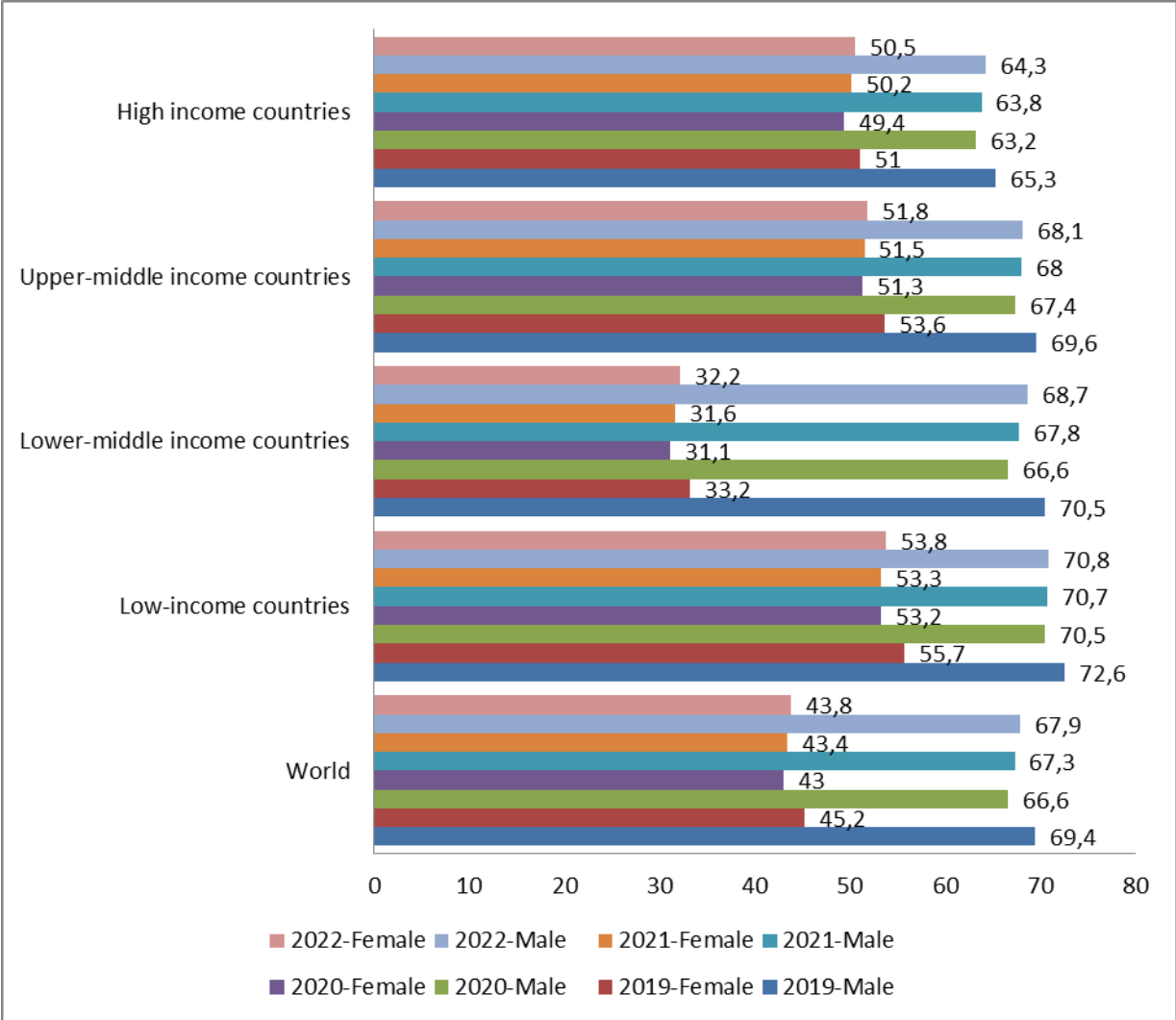
#### ***3.1. Effects On Female Labor***

When the issue is handled within the framework of the female workforce, it should be underlined that efforts to reduce gender inequality in labor markets, especially in the last two decades, have almost been interrupted by the pandemic. As is known, women are in the disadvantaged group in terms of the labor market and the pandemic has increased the fragility of this disadvantaged group in the labor market. First of all, as a result of the restrictions applied due to the Covid 19 pandemic, millions of people had to work from home, and with the closure of schools and workplaces, the unpaid labor burden of women in the household has increased tremendously. In this period, women, who previously shared their care burden with paid helpers at home, had to undertake the entire burden on their own. Therefore, women who have to work from home for wages have undertaken both market-oriented work and domestic work alone to a large extent. ILO reports indicate that the domestic workload of women has increased unevenly and domestic work has largely been left to women all over the world in the relevant period. On the other hand, Covid 19 caused disadvantaged groups (including youth, women,

elderly, and migrant workers) to experience higher employment losses in the labor market. (ILO, 2022, pp. 20-22).

*“Globally, between 2019 and 2020, women’s employment declined by 4.2 percent, representing a drop of 54 million jobs, while men’s employment declined by 3 percent, or 60 million jobs” (ILO, 2021b)*

**Graph 4-Employment to population ratio by sex and income groups, %**



Source: ILO, 2022:25

The Covid 19 pandemic has significantly affected the quality of employment for women. Before the pandemic, women were the most vulnerable link in the labor market, as they concentrated in low-paid, insecure, and labor-intensive jobs. As the pandemic pushed the most fragile link out of the labor market, women workers suffered greatly from this situation. Moreover, women who managed to stay in the labor market during the pandemic period faced



long working hours and a weakening in working conditions. As is known, the services sector is the sector where women's employment is concentrated all over the world and services have been the sector most affected by the pandemic. Thus, female employees in this sector either lost their jobs or faced a very heavy workload and weak working conditions. For example, women employed in health services and social services have both worked long hours at their workplaces at the risk of their lives and faced a heavy workload at home. In this period, approximately 100 million women working in health and care services have great difficulty in balancing their home and work responsibilities. Especially in single-parent households, women tried to fulfill their responsibilities to care for their children and elderly parents after returning from work, with the risk of infecting them. (ILO, 2020e). Women, who make up 70% of the workforce working in healthcare globally, have been in close contact with patients and have faced a much higher risk of disease (UN, 2020).

*“After three weeks of the COVID-19 emergency, we are exhausted, worried, and emotionally drained. Many of us have been infected, and some have died.” (Alberta Delle Grazie, Head Nurse) (ILO, 2020e)*

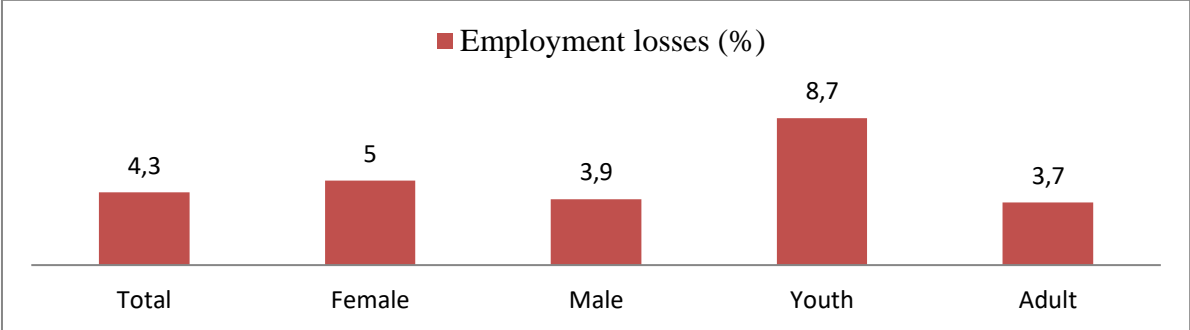
The pandemic has also negatively affected migrant workers, and this group, which is mostly insecure and low-paid, has been the first group to face employment losses. The closure of borders and travel restrictions directly or indirectly affected this group, and migrant workers were excluded from the social assistance provided by countries to their citizens. Losses in wages also directly affected remittances, and families of migrant workers were also pushed into the grip of poverty. Immigrants' debt burden has increased due to job losses and wage reductions. Since migrant labor has significant gender inequalities, female migrant workers who work mostly informally and for low wages have been adversely affected by this situation (Jones et al, 2021, pp. VII-IX). Migrant workers who provide care services in homes where social distancing is not possible, and working in dormitories and elderly care centers have been more susceptible to diseases. A study conducted in Singapore reveals that migrant workers are highly vulnerable workers during the pandemic process (Koh, 2020, pp. 634-636).

### ***3.2. Effects On Youth Labor***

Young people, who were one of the vulnerable groups of the labor market before the pandemic, are among the segments most adversely affected by the pandemic. From the perspective of the labor market, the pandemic has affected the youth much more negatively than the adults. The employment loss of youth is 8,7% while the loss of adults is 3,7%. Except

for high-income countries, many young people who are about to enter the labor market have lost their chance to enter the labor market, and many unemployed young people have not even been in "unemployed" status. In other words, the pandemic has severely disconnected young people from the labor market (ILO, 2021c).

**Graph 5- Decomposition of employment losses by sex and age, 2020**



Source: ILO, 2021c

The closures in sectors that mostly employ young workers (such as retail, tourism and consumer services) have caused young people to be largely unemployed or employed in poor conditions. The closure of national borders and the restriction of mobility have also been a disadvantageous situation for young people. Closures and restrictions have drastically reduced youth employment, as more than forty percent of young people who had a job before the pandemic worked in services, tourism and retail services. In particular, tourism is one of the main sectors that employ young individuals. Since young people are frequently migrating for employment, this situation also prevents migration of young people. It should also be emphasized that young women in middle-income countries are the most affected segment by this decline. Especially in underdeveloped and developing countries, many young girls had to leave education due to financial difficulties and not being able to access the internet, some of them were forced into marriage at a young age. Increase in violence, early marriage, and unintended pregnancy have become the problems of adolescent girls and young women. The pandemic has also negatively impacted the mental health and well-being of youth. (Barford et.al., 2021, p.7). According to a study conducted by UNICEF in the Latin America and Caribbean region, nearly one-third (27%) of 8444 adolescents and young individuals included in the study stated that they faced anxiety and 15% of them stated that they faced depression in the first months of the pandemic (UNICEF, 2020).

Young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) were hardly hit by the pandemic. NEET rates, which were high before the pandemic, have increased significantly after the pandemic all over the world. While rising NEET rates are a problem of

the whole world, it is mainly a problem of low and middle-income countries. It should be underlined that this problem is more severe for young women. NEET rates, which were high for young women in the pre-Covid period, continued to be high compared to men in the post-Covid period. Moreover, NEET rates for young men tended to recover faster than for younger women in the post-COVID period (Table 2).

**Table 2-Proportion of youth not in education, employment, or training (%)**

	World-Total	Low income	Lower-middle income	Upper-middle income	High income
<u>2019-Total</u>	<u>22,9</u>	<u>26,7</u>	<u>27,4</u>	<u>18,6</u>	<u>10,5</u>
2019-Male	14,7	18,5	15,5	14	9,7
2019-Female	31,6	35	40	23,6	11,3
<u>2020-Total</u>	<u>24,9</u>	<u>28,2</u>	<u>29,4</u>	<u>20,7</u>	<u>12,6</u>
2020-Male	17,5	20,5	18,6	16,6	12,2
2020-Female	32,8	36,1	40,8	25,2	13,1
<u>2021-Total</u>	<u>23,8</u>	<u>27,4</u>	<u>28,2</u>	<u>19,3</u>	<u>11,4</u>
2021-Male	15,8	19	16,7	14,9	10,8
2021-Female	32,2	35,9	40,4	24,2	12
<u>2022-Total</u>	<u>23,5</u>	<u>27,7</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>10,4</u>
2022-Male	15,4	18,8	16,4	14,6	9,7
2022-Female	32,1	36,7	40,3	23,7	11

Source: ILOSTAT, 2023

### ***3.3. Effects On Child Labor***

The socio-economic consequences of pandemics affect not only males, females and youth but also children. The Covid 19 pandemic has also deepened poverty and triggered child labor all over the world. Although significant progress has been made in child labor all over the world in the last decades, the pandemic in question seems to have reversed this positive situation. According to ILO reports, 55% of humanity in the world, approximately 4 billion people, do not have any social security and are adversely affected by economic shocks. These people struggle to live with inadequate shelter, nutrition and low wages (ILO, 2020d). Studies show that although it varies by country, a 1% increase in poverty causes at least 0.7% increase in child labor (Edmonds, 2006) (Edmonds and Shady, 2012).

As ILO and UNICEF data reveal, 160 million children globally, that is, one in every 10 children, were child laborers at the beginning of 2020. And half of the children involved are employed in hazardous jobs. Child labor is much more common in rural areas, especially in agriculture. Boys are employed as child laborers more than girls. Sub-Saharan Africa is the region where child labor is most prevalent. Child labor has been on the rise in Sub-Saharan Africa since 2012, despite global progress in child labor in recent decades. The analyzes indicate that 8.9 million children will have to be child laborers by the end of 2022 due to poverty arising from the pandemic (ILO&UNICEF, 2021).

The closure of schools during the pandemic also negatively affects the children of fragile families and pushes them to the labor market (ILO, 2020d). Although many schools have switched to distance education in the relevant process, it should be kept in mind that only 63% of the world population have internet access as of 2021 and this situation causes millions of children to be disconnected from school life (ITU, 2022). Children who have to enter the labor market with the closure of schools are vastly employed in informal and risky jobs and are exploited to a great extent. Moreover, they run the risk of not being able to return to school even if schools are opened (ILO, 2020d).

The effects of the pandemic on child labor have been more severe in regions where child labor is concentrated in the world. Developing countries are noteworthy in this respect and South Asia is one of the geographies that should be considered within this framework. In the South Asian region, the informal sector is very important in terms of workforce, and with the crisis, huge job losses were experienced in the informal sector. This situation led to an increase in employer exploitation, and employees were employed under very harsh conditions, almost like modern slaves. School closures and financial difficulties faced by families have increased child labor and child marriage in the region. Children have significantly lost their chance to return to school, and this has adversely affected their future. For example, in India, children have been increasingly employed in agricultural work, and they have come to the fore with their cheap labor in the textile industry. Child labor has been increasingly utilized in two main export sectors (garments and leather) in Bangladesh. In the mentioned sectors, children were employed in bad conditions and worked long hours at low wages (Idris, 2020, pp.2-4).

#### **4. Conclusion**

The Covid 19 pandemic, which is known as the biggest health crisis of the twenty-first century, has deeply affected the global economy. The pandemic, which created both a supply and demand-side economic shock, reduced production and employment all over the world, and the global economy experienced a fast stagnation that it had never seen with the restrictions and the closing of borders. Although governments have introduced various economic support packages in proportion to their financial strength, these supports have been insufficient, especially in developing countries, and economic problems have arisen. The epidemic also significantly affected the labor markets, causing notable employment losses in all countries. Unemployment has increased significantly, with production halting in some sectors and slowing down in others. Low and middle-income countries experienced higher losses in working hours and had to struggle with higher unemployment rates compared to developed countries. Informal employment continued to be a problem of developing countries after the pandemic as it was before the pandemic, and informal workers were the first to break their ties with the labor market. All these negative developments did not affect all segments of the society equally, and women, youth and children were the groups most severely affected by the pandemic. Women and youth, who had difficulty integrating into the labor market in the pre-pandemic period, remained outside the labor market with the pandemic. While women were overwhelmed by the domestic workload intensified by the pandemic and forced into employment under worse conditions, young people had to interrupt their education and were pushed out of the labor market as the sectors in which they were heavily employed were severely affected by the crisis. NEET rates have increased notably. The pandemic has also increased child labor all over the world. The increase in poverty and the closure of schools pushed children into the labor market. Especially in developing countries, the striking scale of the child population without internet access has had to leave education life. Children who had to enter the labor market were employed in informal and dangerous jobs that would adversely affect their mental and physical development.

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## Genişletilmiş Özet

Dünya tarihi boyunca salgınların ülkelerin sosyal ve ekonomik yapılarını önemli ölçüde etkilediği görülmektedir. Örneğin, Kara Ölüm Ortaçağ'da Avrupa'nın sosyo-ekonomik yapısını önemli ölçüde etkilemiş, işgücünü dörtte bir oranında azaltmış, çok farklı toplumsal sonuçlar yaratmıştır. Çin'in Wuhan kentinde ortaya çıkan ve hızla tüm dünyaya yayılan Covid 19 pandemisi de dünya ekonomilerini derinden sarsmış, daha önce hiç rastlanmadığı biçimde arz ve talep şoklarına neden olarak hem küresel üretimi hem de küresel istihdamı derinden etkilemiş, işgücü piyasalarını adeta dönüştürmüştür. Bu çalışmanın amacı Covid-19 pandemisinin işgücü piyasalarına olan etkilerini gelir grupları ve kırılğan işgücü bağlamında ayrıntılı olarak irdelemektir. Çalışmanın yöntemi literatür taraması olup, ILO&IMF gibi uluslararası veri tabanları, küresel raporlar ve akademik çalışmalar yardımıyla işgücü piyasasındaki dönüşümün gelir grupları ile kadın, genç ve çocuk emeği üzerindeki etkileri detaylı olarak araştırılmaya çalışılmıştır. Pandeminin etkileri gelir grupları itibariyle ülkeler bağlamında farklılaşmış, özellikle düşük ve orta gelirli ülkeler çalışma saatlerinde daha fazla kayıp, daha yüksek işsizlik oranları ve daha düşük işgücüne katılım oranları ile karşı karşıya kalmıştır. İstihdam yapısında hizmetler sektörünün ağırlıklı olduğu ülkelerde önemli olumsuzluklarla karşı karşıya kalmıştır, zira, hizmetler sektörü pandemiden en olumsuz etkilenen sektör olarak ön plana çıkmaktadır. İlgili dönemde enformel istihdam işgücü piyasasının öne çıkan bir niteliği olmuş, pandemi öncesinde enformel olarak istihdam edilen bireyler işgücü piyasası ile kolaylıkla bağları kesilebilen gruplar olarak görüldüğünden, pandemi ile birlikte bu grup işgücü piyasasının dışında kalan ilk grup olmuştur. Uluslararası Çalışma Örgütü verileri uyarınca pandeminin ilk ayında enformel çalışan işçilerin ücretleri %60 azalmıştır. Özellikle Afrika ve Latin Amerika bölgelerinde ilgili kaybın çok daha keskin olduğu %81 düzeyine eriştiği belirlenmiştir. Küresel olarak 2020 yılında toplam çalışanların %62'sinin enformel biçimde istihdam edildiği göz önüne alındığında, söz konusu pandemiye dünyada önemli bir çalışan grubunun yani enformel işçilerin büyük kısmının "açlıktan ölmek ya da virüsten ölmek" arasında adeta bir ikilimde kaldığı sonucu ortaya çıkmıştır. İlgili dönemde işgücü piyasasına dönüşü artıran en önemli unsurlardan biri aşılamanın hızlı ve yaygın biçimde gerçekleştirilebilmesi olmuştur. Ancak, dünyada aşıya erişim ve aşılama oranları da gelir grupları arasında önemli ölçüde farklılaşmıştır. Yüksek gelirli ülkelerin orta ve düşük gelirli ülkelere göre aşıya daha hızlı ve daha yüksek oranda erişimleri söz konusu ülkelerde işgücü piyasasında daha fazla yer alabilmenin önünü açmış, işgücü piyasasına dönüşü kolaylaştırmıştır. Pandemi sonrası dönemde istihdam örüntüleri incelendiğinde ise uzaktan

çalışmanın yaygınlaştığı göze çarpmaktadır, ilgili çalışma biçimi gelişmiş coğrafyalarda çok daha fazla yaygınlaşmış, özellikle Birleşik Krallık, Avustralya, Fransa’da çalışanların yarıya yakını pandemi sonrasında bu şekilde istihdam edilmiştir. Evden çalışma özellikle yüksek dijitalleşme gerektiren işkollarında son derece yaygınlaşmış ve ağırlıklı nitelikli işgücü yani daha ziyade beyaz yakalı çalışanlar için yoğunlaşan bir istihdam örüntüsü haline gelmiştir. Küresel olarak bakıldığında pandemi öncesinde çalışanların yaklaşık %8’i uzaktan çalışmakta iken, pandemi sonrası dönemde bu oran %17.4’e yükselmiştir. İlgili orandaki önemli artış, pandeminin istihdam örüntülerini önemli ölçüde dönüştürdüğünü ortaya koyar niteliktedir. Süreç, kırılmalı işgücü bağlamında değerlendirildiğinde ise, kadınların, gençlerin ve çocukların pandeminin negatif sonuçlarından daha fazla etkilendiği ortaya çıkmaktadır. Konu kadın emeği açısından ele alındığında; pandeminin işgücü piyasasında varolan toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerini artırdığı, ilgili zamana kadar olan kazanımları önemli ölçüde törpülediği gün ışığına çıkmıştır. Pandemi ile birlikte hayata geçen kısıtlamalar ile birlikte milyonlarca insan eve kapanmış, çocuklar evden eğitim almak zorunda kalmış, kadının hane içi yükü büyük ölçüde artmıştır. Daha önceleri bakım sorumluluklarını ücretli emek ile bir nebze hafifletebilen kadınlar, söz konusu süreçte bu imkândan da mahrum olmuştur. Pandemi ile birlikte evden çalışmak zorunda kalan kadınların hane içi iş yükleri ise oldukça eşitsiz biçimde artmış, yani “çifte mesai” çalışan kadınlar daha ağır bir yük ile karşı karşıya kalmıştır. İlgili dönemde istihdam kayıpları da oransal olarak bakıldığında kadınlar için çok daha belirgindir. ILO verileri uyarınca 2019-2020 yılları arasında erkek istihdam oranları %3 azalırken, kadın istihdam oranları %4,2 azalmıştır. Dolayısıyla işgücü piyasasında sınırlı ölçekte yer alan kadın pandemiyle beraber önemli ölçüde işgücü piyasası dışında kalmıştır. Pandemi sürecinde işgücü piyasasında kalabilen kadınlar ise uzun çalışma saatleri ve olumsuz çalışma koşullarında çalışmak zorunda kalmıştır. Diğer bir deyişle pandemi kadın istihdamının sadece niceliğini değil niteliğini de düşürmüştür. Bilindiği üzere, hizmetler sektörü kadınların tüm dünyada en yoğun istihdam edildiği sektördür. Pandemiyle birlikte bu sektörde çalışan kadınlar ya işlerini kaybetmiş, ya da uzun çalışma saatleri ve olumsuz çalışma koşulları ile istihdam edilmişlerdir. Özellikle sağlık ve bakım hizmetleri gibi sosyal hizmetlerde çalışan kadınlar, pandemi süresince işgücü piyasasında kalabilmek için hem kendi sağlıklarını hem de ailelerinin sağlığını riske atmak zorunda kalmışlardır. Küresel olarak sağlık sektöründe çalışan işgücünün %70’ini kadınların oluşturduğu göz önünde bulundurulursa İlgili dönemde sağlık ve bakım hizmetlerinde çalışan yaklaşık 100 milyon kadının hane içi sorumlulukları ile iş yaşamlarını dengelemede zorluk çektiği saptanmıştır. Özellikle tek ebeveynli hanelerde kadınlar evde yaşayan çocuklarını ve bakmakla sorumlu oldukları yaşlı bireyleri enfekte etme riski

taşımışlardır. Sağlık ve bakım sektöründeki istihdamın %70'ini kadınların üstlendiği düşünüldüğünde ilgili riskin büyüklüğü ortaya çıkmaktadır. Pandemi aynı zamanda göçmen işgücünü de oldukça etkilemiştir. Göçmen emeği önemli toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizlikleri sergilediğinden, daha çok enformel ve düşük ücretle çalışan göçmen kadınlar pandemiden oldukça olumsuz etkilenmiştir. Pandemi sonrasında görülen ücret düşüşleri nedeniyle göçmen emekçiler ailelerine çok daha düşük miktarlarda para havaleleri yapabilmiş, milyonlarca göçmen ailesi yoksulluk girdabına sürüklenmiştir. Sınırların kapanması ve gelirlerin azalmasıyla birlikte milyonlarca göçmen kadın işçi borç sarmalına girmiştir. Pandemi işgücü piyasası içinde sadece kadın emeğini değil, kırılgan işgücü olarak adlandırılan diğer emek gruplarını yani genç ve çocuk emeğini de oldukça olumsuz etkilemiştir. Özellikle turizm sektörü önemli ölçüde kadın ve genç istihdam eden bir sektör olarak ön plana çıktığından, sınırların kapanması ve seyahat kısıtlamaları turizm sektörüne adeta sekte vurmuştur. İlgili sektörde istihdam edilen milyonlarca kadın ve genç işgücü piyasası dışında kalmıştır. Uluslararası veriler, pandemi öncesinde de işgücü piyasasına entegre olmakta önemli güçlüklerle karşılaşan genç bireylerin pandemi sonrasında işgücü piyasasına erişemediğini ya da önemli ölçüde işgücü piyasasından dışlandığını, ayrıca NEET oranlarının da belirgin biçimde yükseldiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Covid öncesi dönemde genç erkeklere kıyasla genç kadınlar arasında daha yüksek olan NEET oranları, Covid sonrasında da aynı eğilimi sürdürmüştür. Pandemi özellikle gelişmemiş ve gelişmekte olan ülkelerde buluş çağında bulunan genç kızları oldukça olumsuz etkilemiş, sözkonusu grup finansal yetersizlikler nedeniyle eğitime erişimemiş, eğitim hayatlarını sonlandırmak zorunda kalmıştır. Belirtilen ülkelerde pandemi sonrasında yoksulluğun keskinleşmesiyle birlikte genç kadınların şiddete uğrama oranları yükselmiş, erken evlilikler artmış ve istenmeyen gebelikler yükselmiştir. Söz konusu olumsuzluklar gençlerin ruhsal sağlığını da olumsuz etkilemiştir. UNICEF'in ortaya koyduğu üzere pandemi sonrasında Latin Amerika ve Karayipler bölgesinde yaşayan ergenlerin ve gençlerin üçte birlik kısmı anksiyete, depresyon gibi ruhsal problemlerle karşı karşıya kalmıştır. Pandemi küresel olarak son yıllarda önemli aşama kaydedilen çocuk işçiliği ile mücadele gayretlerini de sekteye uğratmıştır. Bilindiği üzere, yoksulluk çocuk işçiliğini artıran en temel faktörlerdendir. Pandemi ile birlikte yoksulluğun artması özellikle gelişmekte olan coğrafyalarda çocuk emeği kullanımını da artırmış, ilgili bölgelerde çocukların tehlikeli işlerde istihdamı ve enformel istihdamının arttığı belirlenmiştir. Küresel veriler, pandemi sonrasında çocukların sadece %63'ünün eğitimleri için gerekli internete erişebilme şansının olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır, dolayısıyla ilgili şansa erişemeyen dünya çocuklarının üçte birlik kısmının ilgili dönemde okulla bağlantısı kesilmiştir. İşin ürktücü yanı pandemi sonrası toparlanma

döneminde söz konusu çocukların önemli kısmının yeniden eğitime dönmeme riskinin söz konusu olmasıdır. Literatürdeki çalışmalar özellikle gelişmekte olan ülkelerde bilhassa da Güney Asya coğrafyasında pandemi sonrası dönemde çocuk istihdamının arttığını ortaya koymaktadır. İlgili çalışmalar uyarınca, Hindistan'da pandemi sonrasında hem tarım sektöründe çocuk istihdamı hem de tekstil sektöründe düşük ücretli çocuk istihdamı artış göstermiştir. Aynı coğrafyada Bangladeş gibi ihracata yönelik sanayileşmenin ağırlıklı olduğu ülkelerde de çocukların riskli işlerde, düşük ücretlerle çalıştırıldığı çalışmaların ortaya koyduğu önemli bulgular arasındadır. Sonuç olarak, ülkelerin makro ekonomik yapıları pandemiden etkilenme düzeylerini önemli ölçüde farklılaştırmış, pandeminin dezavantajlı gruplar üzerindeki etkileri oldukça sert olmuş, ilgili gruplar pandemi öncesi dönemdeki kazanımlarını pandemiyle birlikte adeta kaybetmiştir.