

Happiness of Working Women and Homemakers in Türkiye: The Role of Social Norms and Issues in the Work and Home Domains

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we analyze the happiness levels of working and homemaker women in Türkiye. For this purpose, we utilized individual-level data from the Life Satisfaction Survey (LSS), covering a 19-year period from 2004 to 2022 with over 344,000 observations. Our findings reveal that even after controlling for various background factors, working women report significantly lower happiness levels than homemakers. The study examined the roles of social norms, work-related issues, and home-related issues. Social norms against women are not overwhelmingly prevalent, as nearly 80% of women does not report significant social pressure due to gender. However, gender-related social pressures partly explain the happiness gap between working women and homemakers. Problems in the work domain do not significantly drive this differential in happiness. Instead, issues in the home domain contribute to the happiness disadvantage, particularly in financially better-off households. This suggests that while societal norms play a role, the balance between work and home responsibilities, especially in wealthier households, is crucial for understanding lower happiness levels among working women. The findings underscore the importance of addressing home-related challenges to improve the well-being of working women.

Keywords: Women's Work, Gender, Happiness, Well-being

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1. Introduction

Despite advancements in women's social status, particularly in developed countries through the women's movement, questions persist about the impact on overall happiness. Interestingly, women in traditional societies enjoy a happiness advantage (Meisenberg & Woodley, 2015), while this advantage has been shifting in favor of men in developed countries (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2004; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2009).

The women's movement has brought about significant gains, including improved labor market outcomes and a narrowed gender wage gap in developed countries. In North America, East Asia, the Pacific, Europe, Central Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean regions, over 50% of women aged 15-64 are engaged in the labor market (World Bank, 2022). In OECD countries, the gender pay gap, measured as the difference between the median earnings of women and men relative to the median earnings of men, decreased from 18.1% in 2000 to 11.6% in 2020 (OECD, 2023).

Theoretically, improvements in labor market outcomes for women are expected to enhance their well-being by increasing their income and thereby broadening their range of choices. Additionally, securing employment or establishing a connection to the labor market can provide women with alternatives beyond traditional marriage roles. Increased economic independence can strengthen women's negotiating position within the household. Specifically, it allows women to have a more substantial fallback option, or a "threat point," which refers to the alternative they would pursue if negotiations within the home do not go favorably. By having a viable alternative, women can exert greater influence over household decisions and negotiations. (Duflo, 2012; Farmer & Tiefenthaler, 1997; Rodriguez, 2022). Thus, we expect to observe higher welfare for working women than for homemakers from a standard economic perspective.

There are other opinions on the impact on women who work outside the home. First, working women may not be better off if they also continue to engage in housework after returning from work. For instance, the famous book "The Second Shift" by Hochschild and Machung (2012) argues that women's entry into the paid workforce did not lead to a decrease in household responsibilities, resulting in them effectively working a "second shift". It is also known that some types of jobs and workplaces are also exploitative for women (Kabeer et al., 2018). Second, there seems to be a trade-off between the labor market and the marriage market for women. It has been documented that men do not prefer to marry women who are seen as ambitious and deeply connected to the labor market (Fisman et al., 2006; Hitsch et al., 2010). Promotions increase the odds of divorce for women but do not have the same effect on men (Folke & Rickne, 2020). Since compared to marriage, divorce reduces people's well-being significantly and even in the long-term (Lucas, 2005), we may observe lower subjective well-being for working women, especially in the higher ranks of the labor market. There is also evidence that women's employment increases domestic violence against women in Sub-Saharan Africa (Cools & Kotsadam, 2017), India (Eswaran & Malhotra, 2011), Spain (Alonso-Borrego & Carrasco, 2017) and Türkiye (Erten & Keskin, 2021).

Third, pervasive gender norms have deep historical roots (Alesina et al., 2013). According to these norms, women are expected to operate in the domain of the home, and men are expected to operate in the labor market to earn a living for the family (Alesina et al., 2013; Davidoff & Hall, 2018). These norms prevent women from working (Jayachandran, 2021), and even if they work, they may face negative consequences because they are not in line with those norms. Many studies have demonstrated that societies may sanction individuals when they fall into positions that are not in line with social norms (Clark, 2003). Thus, working women may feel unhappy because they face social disapproval.

It is also possible that while assessing their life satisfaction or happiness, homemaker women may consider only their family life, whereas working women may also take into consideration the circumstances surrounding their job. Even if the wage gap has closed in many countries, pervasive discrimination against women persists in the labor market. In addition, working women may take their male counterparts as a reference group (Başlevent & Kirmanoğlu, 2017). On average, women fare worse than men based on objective measures such as lower earnings. This may put a pressure on their wellbeing assessment because studies have revealed that having a relatively worse off condition reduces wellbeing (e.g. Clark (2003); Ugur (2021)). There is evidence that married women in Türkiye are often excluded from prestigious and traditionally male-dominated occupations (Ermiş-Mert, 2017). Therefore, working women may feel less satisfied with their lives due to unfavorable circumstances in their job. However, job problems do not explain the plight of working women because women generally have higher job satisfaction than men (Clark, 1997).

To clarify the concepts, throughout this article, when we refer to "working women," we address women employed or engaged in some form of work outside the home for which they receive financial or non-financial compensation. It is important to recognize that homemakers also contribute significantly through their work, although much of it may be unpaid and invisible (Daniels, 1987).

This study explores the happiness of women in Türkiye who work outside the home compared to those who are homemakers. Individual-level data obtained from the Life Satisfaction Survey between 2004 and 2022 were utilized. Additionally, the analysis explores whether working women and homemakers feel social pressure based on their gender or occupation and whether such pressure explains the happiness differential. Furthermore, to clarify whether problems in the work or home domain contribute to the happiness gap, we also study women’s job and marital satisfaction.

To explain the context in which women working outside operate, we provide some indicators of working women’s life in Türkiye. Opportunities in the labor market are improving for women in Türkiye. Figure 1 shows that women’s labor force participation has been constantly rising, except for 2020 and 2021, the periods of the COVID-19 pandemic.

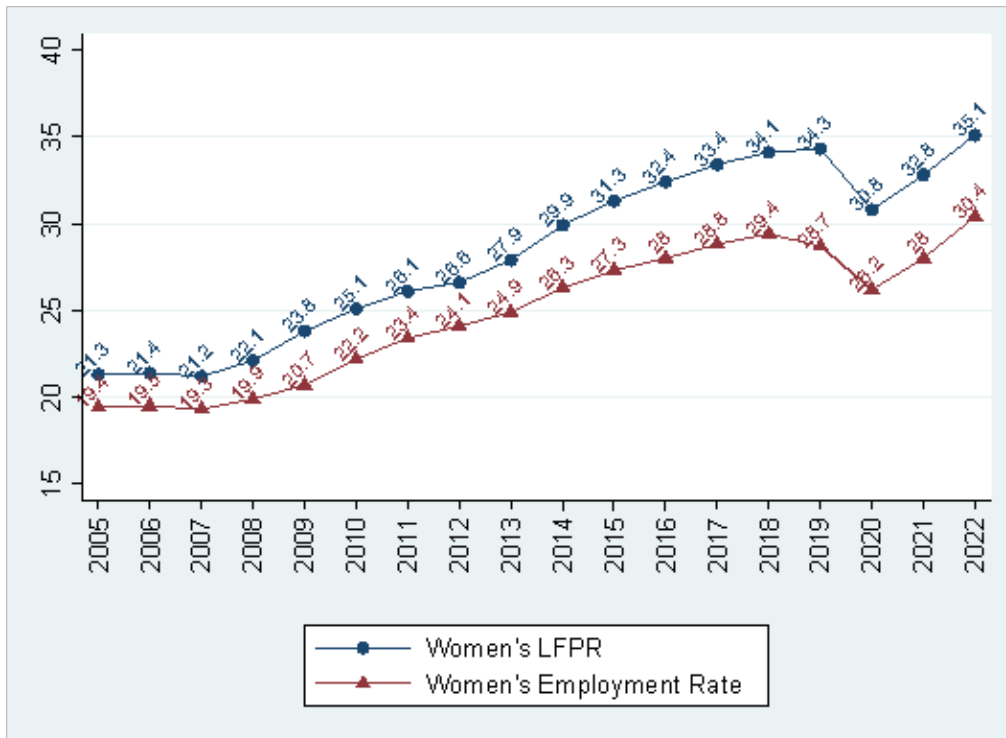


Figure 1. Labor Market Indicators for Women in Türkiye

Source: TURKSTAT (2023)

Despite women’s participation in the workforce in Türkiye, household chores are not equally divided between men and women. According to the 2014-2015 Time-Use Survey by TURKSTAT, as of 2015, working men spent an average of 0.77 hours on household chores, while working women spent approximately 3.52 hours – nearly five times the amount allocated by working men. Homemaker women dedicate even more time, averaging 4.98 hours to household chores, compared to 1.12 hours dedicated by unemployed men (TURKSTAT, 2020). These statistics underscore the persistent gender imbalance in domestic responsibilities and hint at the plight of working women in Türkiye.

One can argue that individuals are supposed to maximize their happiness by engaging in endeavors that maximize their utility/happiness from a neoclassical perspective. However, evidence has shown that individuals may not always choose what is best for them (Gilbert, 2009). Thus, policymakers can influence happiness by altering the social environment in a way that favors happiness.

Subjective well-being measures are increasingly being used to evaluate the successes and failures of public policy throughout the world (Stiglitz et al., 2018; Stiglitz et al., 2009). Our results have significant implications for policymakers in Türkiye. Those who aim to increase women’s contribution to economic output should be concerned with ways to improve the subjective well-being of working women.

The contribution of this research to the literature lies in demonstrating the happiness differential between homemakers and working women in Türkiye, a Muslim and patriarchal society that has had a liberal stance on women’s rights since its founding. This study is relevant because it is based on the largest available and nationally representative dataset from 2004 to 2022.

2. Literature Review

To understand what affects women's happiness, we first review the results about women's overall happiness in different contexts. Some unexpected results have emerged from the literature. Countries where significant advancements have been achieved in the direction of gender equality, especially regarding women's access to the labor market, have also experienced a decline in female happiness. Blanchflower and Oswald (2004) examined happiness trends in the United States and Great Britain from the early 1970s to the late 1990s. Their findings suggested that during this period, women tended to be happier than men in both countries. However, a noteworthy observation from that study is the declining happiness trend among women in the United States. Stevenson and Wolfers (2009) further contributed to this discussion, highlighting that despite women having a life satisfaction edge over men in the 1970s in the United States, there was a systematic decrease in women's happiness. Intriguingly, women reported less happiness than men after the 1990s. A similar diminishing female happiness relative to male happiness is also noted for European Union countries (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2009). In Switzerland, working women have been found to benefit from living in places where people approve equal pay for equal work in terms of better labor market outcomes (Lalive & Stutzer, 2010). According to the same study, working women are less satisfied with life in communities where the approval of the gender wage gap is higher.

One line of research investigated a wide range of countries and found that women in traditional societies, where they are not economically active, report higher happiness. Tesch-Römer et al. (2008) identified a small negative correlation (0.10) between the female life satisfaction advantage over males and the relative female economic activity, as measured by the share of women aged 15 years and above participating in the labor market compared to men. Using World Values Survey data from more than 90 countries, Meisenberg and Woodley (2015) documented that a higher female-to-male labor force participation ratio and higher rates of female non-agricultural employment correlate with lower happiness among women than men. This negative impact also extends to average life satisfaction for women compared with men. Utilizing the Gallup World Poll dataset, which covers over 70 countries worldwide, Zweig (2015) found that the happiness advantage of women over men is more pronounced in lower-income countries and disappears in higher-income countries. Additionally, there is no observed relationship between women's rights, as measured by the proportion of seats occupied by women in legislative bodies, and women's happiness.

Another line of research directly documented the differences in subjective well-being among women with varying labor market statuses. Sato (2022) reported that homemakers in Japan are happier than working women, based on a panel dataset that accounts for individual fixed effects. Using longitudinal data from the Australian HILDA survey, Booth and Van Ours (2009) found that women working part-time express greater satisfaction with their working hours than those working full-time, and that the life satisfaction of partnered women decreases when they work full-time. De Rock and Périlleux (2023) reported higher life satisfaction among women working part-time in a Belgian dataset. Their study also documented that women who work part-time often undertake a higher share of unpaid domestic work, effectively resulting in a "second shift" at home.

Drawing on data from the International Social Survey Programme, which includes 28 countries, Treas et al. (2011) found that among women with partners (married or cohabiting), homemakers experience greater happiness than those working full-time, although the difference is marginal. At the same time, there is no difference in happiness between homemakers and those who work part-time. Most of the observations in the sample come from Western countries (Treas et al., 2011). Başlevent and Kirmanoğlu (2017) examined women's well-being using the European Social Survey dataset and found a negative impact of paid work on well-being compared to homemakers in settings with higher gender inequality. However, this negative impact is mitigated in places with greater gender equality.

Overall, the literature documents a negative relationship between women's happiness and higher participation in the labor market. This has been observed through country-level trends (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2004; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2009), cross-country (or provincial) comparisons (Lalive & Stutzer, 2010; Meisenberg & Woodley, 2015; Zweig, 2015), and comparisons between homemakers and working women (Başlevent & Kirmanoğlu, 2017; Booth & Van Ours, 2009; Sato, 2022; Treas et al., 2011). However, most studies primarily provide evidence regarding comparisons between working and homemaker women within Western cultures, with the exception of Sato (2022), which focuses on Japan.

To the best of the author's knowledge, no study has thoroughly investigated the well-being of working women in comparison to homemakers in Türkiye. Although the broader literature attributes happiness differences to homemakers' conformity and working women's deviation from traditional gender roles, this has not been empirically tested. Moreover, previous studies have not distinguished between different types of paid work, such as public sector employment, which often offers better working conditions, versus roles like employee, employer, self-employed, or unpaid family worker.

4. Data

The data used in this study were obtained from the Life Satisfaction Survey (LSS), which is conducted annually by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT). The LSS uses a stratified random sample that represents the non-institutionalized adult population (18 years and older) in Türkiye. In the 2004 survey, 6,714 participants participated, and in 2022, a total of 9,841 individuals were interviewed. The 2013 survey aimed for provincial-level representation, resulting in 196,203 observations. From 2004 to 2020, a total of 344,322 observations were collected.

The primary goal of the LSS is to assess people's quality of life, but it also covers various aspects related to life satisfaction. The survey is based on cross-sectional data. Until 2020, data were collected through face-to-face interviews. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews in 2020 were conducted via telephone using the Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) method, which was used thereafter.

To measure the happiness of individuals, the survey asks: "When you think about your life as a whole, how happy are you?" Responses were categorized into five options ranging from 1 (Very Happy) to 5 (Not Happy at All).

Participants were initially asked if they had worked in the past week with the following response options: (1) worked, (2) not worked but still involved in work/job, (3) not worked. Those who indicated they did not work were then asked to specify their reasons with the following options: (1) Unable to find a job, (2) Seasonal worker, (3) Continuing education and training, (4) Engaged in household duties (including caring for children, elderly, or sick individuals), (5) Retired or stopped working, (6) Disabled or ill (incapable of working), (7) Elderly (not retired but considers oneself too old to work, 65+), (8) Have other income/no need to work, (9) Family and personal reasons, (10) Other.

We categorized individuals who indicated that they worked or were still involved in their job as working. Those who reported engaging in household duties were classified as homemakers.

The survey also collected information on whether individuals work in the public or private sector. Additionally, occupational status was recorded with the following question: "What is your status in the job you are working in?" The response options were: (1) Salaried/wage-earning/daily-paid, (2) Employer, (3) Self-employed, and (4) Unpaid family worker. These four occupational categories were used to differentiate between worker types.

Other background variables included age, marital status (never married, married, widowed, divorced), the highest level of education completed (elementary school or lower, secondary education or equivalent, high school or equivalent, and university or higher education), total household income (measured in five brackets), subjective health assessment (on a 5-point Likert scale), and satisfaction with friendship (on a 5-point Likert scale). Participants were also asked about their greatest source of happiness in life, which they had as options: (1) Success, (2) Work, (3) Health, (4) Love, (5) Money, and (6) Other. These variables were used as background variables in the regression analysis.

Starting from the 2009 survey, participants were asked about their experiences with social pressure. Specifically, to measure social pressure related to gender, the question was: "Do you experience any societal pressure due to your gender?" Response options included: (1) Never, (2) Sometimes, (3) Usually, and (4) Always. This question helps us understand whether social pressure contributes to the happiness disparity between homemakers and working women. Using a similar question structure and response options, working individuals were also asked whether they experienced social pressure due to their employment or job. This information allows us to document whether working women experience social pressure related to their employment.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked about their job satisfaction and satisfaction with their earnings. This data was examined to investigate whether the difference in happiness between homemakers and working women is related to issues in the workplace.

Married individuals were also asked about their marital satisfaction. This question was used to compare the marital satisfaction of homemakers and working women, potentially shedding light on any issues in the home domain.

5. Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the observations included in the analysis from 2004 to 2022. The first column provides the mean and standard deviation values for all women in the sample. The second and third columns show the mean and standard deviation values for the homemaker and working woman, respectively. A t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between working and homemaker women for the variables in each row. The significance of this difference is indicated by a star symbol in the third column.

According to Table 1, the average happiness score of working women (Mean = 3.56; SD = 0.86) is lower than that of homemakers (Mean = 3.60; SD = 0.48). The difference between the two groups is slight (a 0.04-point gap, but it is statistically significant). In terms of happiness categories, 9% of homemakers and 10% of working women

reported being very happy, which seems inconsistent with the higher average happiness of homemakers, although it is statistically significant. Among working women, 49% described themselves as happy, compared to 54% of homemakers. The proportion of working women who say they are neither happy nor unhappy is 27%, whereas this rate is 31% for homemakers. The proportion of working women who are unhappy is 8%, compared to 7% for homemakers. The proportion of individuals stating they are very unhappy is 2% for both groups.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Whole Sample	Homemaker Women	Working Women
Happiness Score	3.57 [0.86]	3.60 [0.84]	3.56 [0.86]***
Very happy	0.09 [0.29]	0.09 [0.29]	0.10 [0.30]***
Happy	0.52 [0.50]	0.54 [0.50]	0.49 [0.50]***
Neutral	0.28 [0.45]	0.27 [0.44]	0.31 [0.46]***
Unhappy	0.08 [0.27]	0.07 [0.26]	0.08 [0.26]
Very unhappy	0.03 [0.16]	0.02 [0.15]	0.02 [0.16]**
Age	43.64 [16.40]	43.60 [14.83]	37.47 [11.50]***
Income Category	2.40 [1.40]	2.18 [1.28]	3.20 [1.50]***
Education Level			
Primary School or less	0.65 [0.48]	0.76 [0.43]	0.41 [0.49]***
Secondary school or eq.	0.10 [0.30]	0.11 [0.31]	0.09 [0.28]***
High school or equivalent	0.14 [0.35]	0.11 [0.31]	0.18 [0.38]***
University or more	0.10 [0.30]	0.03 [0.16]	0.32 [0.47]***
Marital Status			
Never Married	0.13 [0.33]	0.05 [0.22]	0.22 [0.41]***
Married	0.74 [0.44]	0.85 [0.36]	0.69 [0.46]***
Widowed	0.11 [0.31]	0.08 [0.27]	0.03 [0.17]***
Divorced/Seperated	0.03 [0.17]	0.02 [0.13]	0.06 [0.24]***
Subjective Health	3.47 [0.93]	3.45 [0.92]	3.65 [0.83]***
Satis. with Friendships	3.99 [0.52]	3.99 [0.50]	3.99 [0.54]**
Values perceived to bring happiness			
Success	0.05 [0.22]	0.03 [0.17]	0.07 [0.26]***
Work	0.01 [0.12]	0.01 [0.11]	0.02 [0.13]***
Health	0.74 [0.44]	0.76 [0.43]	0.69 [0.46]***
Love	0.16 [0.36]	0.16 [0.37]	0.17 [0.38]***
Money	0.03 [0.18]	0.03 [0.17]	0.04 [0.18]***
Other	0.01 [0.11]	0.01 [0.10]	0.01 [0.11]*
N	189491		

Notes: mean coefficients; SD is in brackets, * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

There is a significant age difference between working women and homemakers, with working women being, on average, approximately 7 years younger. Additionally, the household income of working women is about one income bracket higher than that of homemakers. Both age and income level differences are statistically significant at the 1% significance level.

In the sample, working women are less likely than homemakers to have only a primary school education or less or to have completed secondary school. However, they are more likely to have completed high school or obtained a university degree or higher. The differences in all education categories are statistically significant at the 1% significance level. Regarding marital status, working women are more likely to be never married or divorced, while homemakers are more likely to be married or widowed. These differences are statistically significant at the 1% significance level.

According to Table 1, the subjective health rating for working women is 3.65 out of 5, compared to 3.45 for homemakers, with this difference being statistically significant. The t-test results show a statistically significant difference in satisfaction with friendship scores between homemakers and working women although the results are quite similar. When examining the values perceived to bring happiness, differences emerge: a higher percentage of working women expect happiness from success, work, love, and money, whereas homemakers are more likely to expect happiness from health than working women.

Given the small difference between homemakers' and working women's happiness differential, it is worth examining the happiness scores over time. Figure 2 presents the average happiness scores of working and homemaking women

across the sample years. According to Figure 2, before 2010, the happiness levels in working and homemaking were very similar. However, from 2010 onwards, the average happiness level of working women has been lower than that of homemakers. This indicates that the differences in Table 1 reflect not only the overall sample average but also a consistent pattern of higher happiness among homemakers over the years. Moreover, the gap between working and homemaking women has widened even further since 2020.

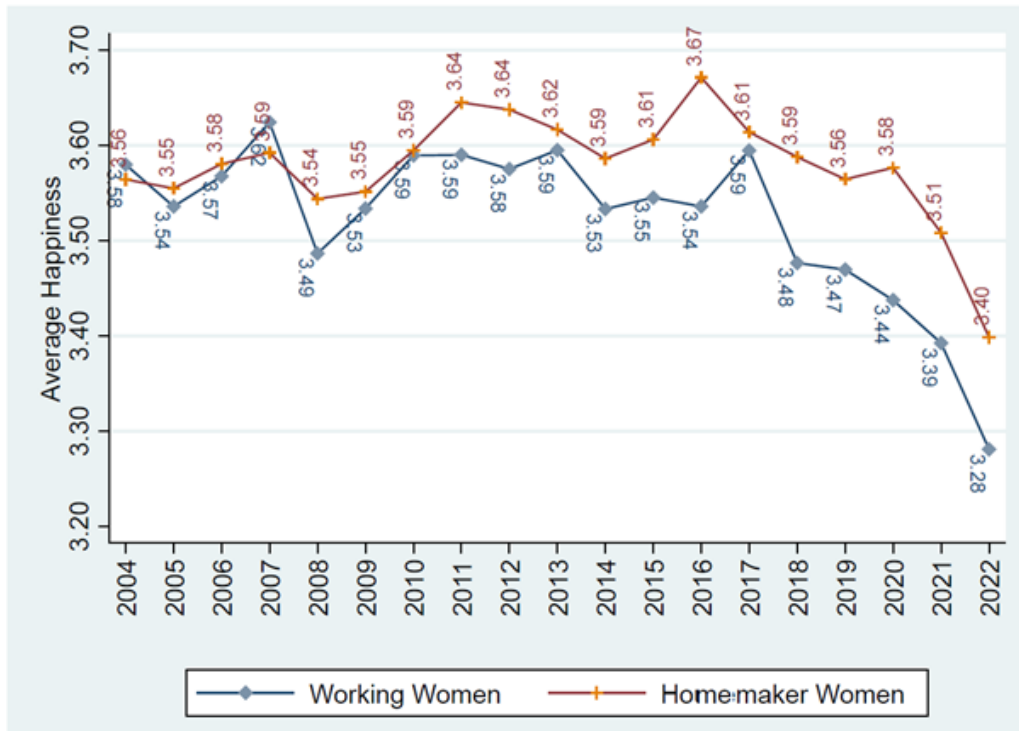


Figure 2. Average Happiness Score of Working and Homemaker Women

5.1. Regression Results

Table 2 presents the main results of the regression analysis conducted using the OLS model. The sample is restricted to homemaker women and women working outside the home in all models. In Model 1, we include only a dummy variable for working women. The working woman dummy variable and household income level are included in Model 2. Model 3 adds background control variables to those in Model 2 and includes dummy variables for each year, with 2004 as the reference year. Model 4 incorporates a dummy variable for the public sector, considering that working conditions and compliance with working hours might be better in the public sector. If the difference in happiness levels between women working outside the home and homemakers is due to factors like working overtime or varying working conditions, we expect the inclusion of the public sector dummy variable to reduce this differential. Model 5 tests whether the difference between women working and homemakers varies by employment type by adding dummy variables for employer, self-employed, and unpaid family worker categories, with employees as the reference category.

OLS models were used for ease of interpretation, and other studies have shown consistency between OLS and ordered probit results (e.g., Ferrer-i-Carbonell & Frijters, 2004). The same regression models estimated using ordered probit methods are provided in Table A-1 in the Appendix. Table A-2 shows the marginal effects calculated from ordered probit models, and these results broadly exhibit similar patterns to the OLS results.

Table 2 displays coefficients for the working woman dummy, household income, and other employment-related variables. The coefficients of the background variables are presented in Table A-3 in the Appendix.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Working Woman (ref. Homemaker)	-0.048*** (0.005)	-0.135*** (0.005)	-0.091*** (0.006)	-0.096*** (0.008)	-0.141*** (0.009)
Income		0.084*** (0.002)	0.065*** (0.002)	0.065*** (0.002)	0.069*** (0.002)
Public Sector				0.007 (0.009)	0.001 (0.009)
Employer (ref. Employee)					0.041 (0.032)
Self-Employed					-0.000 (0.018)
Unpaid family Worker					0.167*** (0.012)
Basic Controls	-	-	+	+	+
R-squared	0.001	0.018	0.163	0.163	0.164
N	157122	157122	154126	154126	154126

Notes: Robust standard errors are presented in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. The basic control variables: age, age squared, marital status categories (never married, married, widowed, divorced), education level, subjective health, satisfaction with friendship, and values thought to bring happiness (Success, Work, Health, Love, Money, and Others) and 18 dummy variables for each survey year.

The coefficient for the dummy for “working woman” is consistently negative and statistically significant across all five models. In Model 1, the results indicate that the happiness score of working women is approximately 0.05 points lower than that of homemakers. Model 2 includes the household income bracket, which has an expected positive coefficient. The addition of this variable further decreases the coefficient for the “working woman” dummy, suggesting that among women with the same household income level, working women are considerably less happy than homemakers. Model 3 adds dummy variables for each survey year along with a comprehensive set of control variables, such as age, education level, and marital status. The results continue to show that working women are less happy than homemakers.

In Model 4, the inclusion of a public sector employment dummy variable does not significantly alter the coefficient of the working woman variable, and the public sector variable itself is not statistically significant. This indicates that the relative unhappiness of working women is not likely related to adverse working conditions specific to the private sector.

Model 5 introduces dummy variables for employer, self-employed, and unpaid family worker categories with the reference category of employee. The coefficient for the “working outside” variable in this model represents the difference between homemakers and women employed as employees. Results show that employed women have lower happiness than homemakers. The coefficients for self-employed and employer categories are not statistically significant, but the coefficient for unpaid family workers is notably large, positive, and statistically significant. This suggests that the happiness disadvantage for working women may be linked to issues within the home domain, as women working within family do not exhibit this same disadvantage.

5.2. Heterogeneous Effects

In this section, we examine whether specific characteristics or conditions amplify the impact of working outside on happiness by analyzing differences in happiness between working women and homemakers across various demographic groups. We estimated the coefficient of the working woman dummy variable in all regression models in Table 3, including the control variables from Model 5 in Table 2.

First, we investigate whether there is a difference in happiness between working women and homemakers across different age groups. In Panel A, the “Young” dummy variable is defined as 1 for those under 25 and 0 for everyone else. The “Middle-aged” dummy variable covers those between 25 and 44 years of age, and the “After-mid” dummy variable represents those between 45 and 65 years of age. Overall, the results indicate that the happiness of working women is lower than that of homemakers across all age categories, with the most pronounced difference observed in the 45 to 64-year age group. However, this discrepancy is not due to older individuals experiencing more health problems because we controlled for subjective health. It may instead reflect differing social values regarding the roles of women.

In Panel B, the sample is divided into three categories based on marital status: never-married, married, widowed, and divorced. We examine the link between working outside the home environment and happiness for each category in comparison to homemakers. The results show that in each category, women who work outside are less happy than homemakers. The negative relationship between working outside and happiness is most pronounced among married women. For never-married women, the difference in happiness levels between homemakers and working women was the

smallest and only weakly significant. Among widowed women, although the happiness difference between homemakers and those working outside is negative, it is statistically significant only at the 10% significance level. The negative relationship between happiness and working outside is similarly observed among divorced women.

Table 3. OLS Happiness Regression Results, Heterogeneous Effects

Panel A	Younger than 25 years	Between 25 and 44 years	Between 45 and 64 years	
Working Woman (ref. Homemakers)	-0.092*** (0.025)	-0.143*** (0.011)	-0.164*** (0.020)	
R-squared	0.151	0.159	0.165	
N	15594	75856	50366	
Panel B	Never Married	Married	Widowed	Divorced
Working Woman (ref. Homemakers)	-0.042* (0.023)	-0.159*** (0.010)	-0.115* (0.063)	-0.119*** (0.046)
R-squared	0.140	0.140	0.176	0.191
N	13915	125352	10579	4280
Panel C	Primary school/less	Middle school/equivalen t	High school/equivalent	University/ab ove
Working Woman (ref. Homemakers)	-0.148*** (0.016)	-0.152*** (0.032)	-0.139*** (0.021)	-0.146*** (0.019)
R-squared	0.061	0.060	0.081	0.074
N	46229	228483	21114	7838

Notes: Robust standard errors are presented in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. All models were estimated by including the following control variables: age, age squared, household income, marital status categories (never married, married, widowed, divorced), education level, subjective health assessment, satisfaction with friendship, and values thought to bring happiness (Success, Work, Health, Love, Money, and Others) and 18 dummy variables for each survey year.

Panel C investigates whether the relationship between working outside and happiness varies according to the educational level of women. The sample is divided into categories based on education level: primary school or less, middle school and equivalent, high school and equivalent, and university and above. The coefficients for the working outside dummy variable are presented for each education level. Results from Models 1 to 4 show that the working outside variable consistently has a large negative and significant coefficient. Comparisons of these coefficients indicate that the happiness disadvantage associated with working outside is not strongly related to educational differences.

Overall, the results suggest that working outside is associated with lower happiness, particularly among married women and older age groups. This implies that the unhappiness experienced by working women may be linked to societal pressures, especially for those in their older years. Additionally, the significant negative impact on married working women and the lack of a negative impact on unpaid family worker women suggest that conflicts in the home domain may also contribute to working women's unhappiness.

5.3. Role of Social Norms

To clarify the role of social norms in the happiness of working women, we examined their reports of experiencing social pressure related to their work or employment. As detailed in the data section, all participants were asked about societal pressures related to various aspects of their identity. Specifically, working individuals were asked whether they felt social pressure due to their employment. We would see a high percentage of women to report experiencing social pressure if society is generally opposed to women's employment.

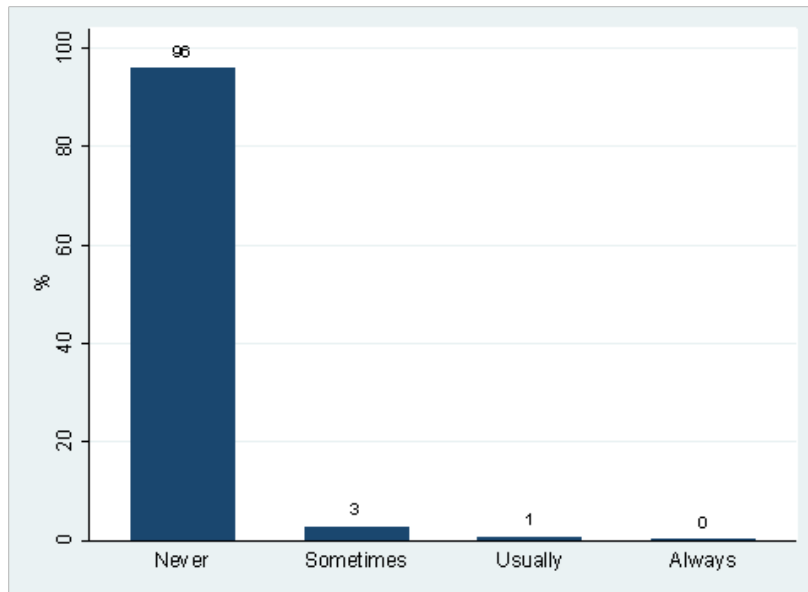


Figure 3. Perceptions of Social Pressure Experience Due to Work/Employment

Figure 3 illustrates the responses of working women regarding social pressure related to their employment/work. Notably, 96% of the working women reported never having felt social pressure due to their work, indicating that the majority of the working women did not experience social disapproval related to their employment.

Figure 4 compares feelings of social pressure due to gender between working women and homemakers. The blue bars represent the distribution of gender-related social pressure among homemakers, whereas the red bars depict this pressure for working women. According to Figure 4, 92% of homemakers and 80% of working women reported not experiencing social pressure based on gender, suggesting that most individuals in both groups did not experience overt gender-based discrimination. However, the percentage of working women reporting any social pressure is higher than that of homemakers. We conducted a one-way ANOVA test to determine whether the differences in social pressure between homemakers and working women were statistically significant. The test results ($F = 2905.21$; $p\text{-value} < 0.01$) indicate significant differences in the social pressure experiences of homemakers and working women. These results suggest that homemakers generally receive more social approval regarding their gender than working women.

Appendix Figure A-1 presents the rates of experiencing social pressure due to gender over the years, including those reporting feeling social pressure sometimes, usually, or always. The observation that working women report more gender-related pressure is consistent with the finding that they also report lower happiness.

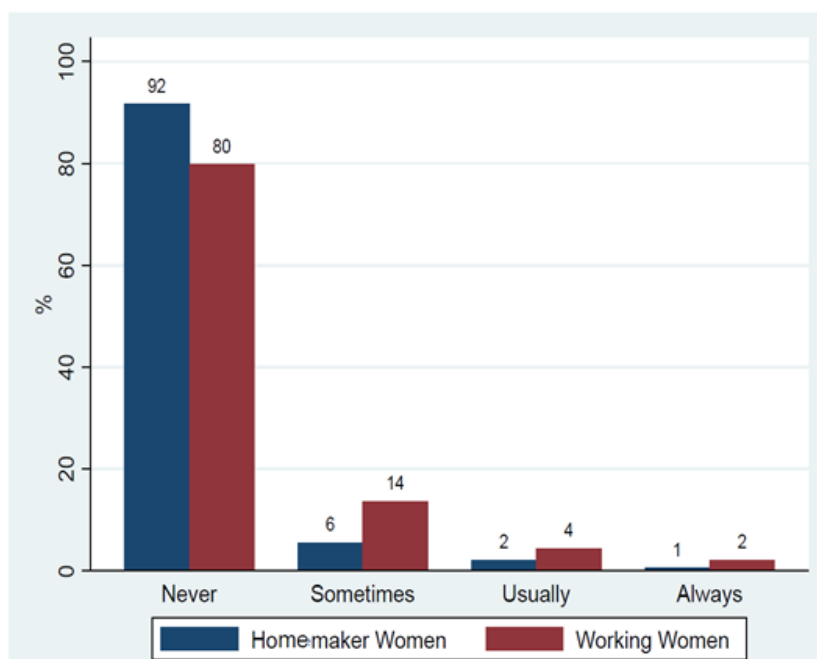


Figure 4. Perception of Social Pressure Experience Due to Gender

The higher perception of gender-related social pressure among working women than among homemakers may be due to two reasons. First, working women might face a more gender-based treatment as they enter domains traditionally associated with men. Second, they may have a higher awareness of such issues compared to homemakers.

Because questions about social pressure due to employment were not administered to homemakers, we did not include this factor in the regression analysis. We conducted regression analysis including gender-related social pressure to observe its impact on the happiness disadvantage of working women. The regression models are similar to those presented in Table 2 but include feelings of gender-related social pressure.

According to Table 4, the coefficient for social pressure due to gender is large and negative, and the coefficient of working woman decreases with the inclusion of this variable in almost all models compared with the results in Table 2. These results suggest that gender-related social pressure plays a role in explaining the happiness disadvantage of working women.

Table 4. OLS Regression Results for Happiness Role of Social Pressure

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Working Woman (ref. Homemaker)	-0.021*** (0.005)	-0.115*** (0.006)	-0.088*** (0.006)	-0.096*** (0.009)	-0.136*** (0.009)
Social pressure due to Gender	-0.178*** (0.005)	-0.194*** (0.005)	-0.141*** (0.005)	-0.141*** (0.005)	-0.140*** (0.005)
Income		0.087*** (0.002)	0.062*** (0.002)	0.063*** (0.002)	0.066*** (0.002)
Public Sector				0.010 (0.010)	-0.001 (0.010)
Employer (ref. Employee)					0.063* (0.033)
Self-Employed					-0.001 (0.019)
Unpaid family Worker					0.166*** (0.012)
Basic Controls	-	-	+	+	+
R-squared	0.011	0.030	0.168	0.168	0.169
N	141143	141143	138147	138147	138147

Notes: Robust standard errors are presented in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. The basic control variables: age, age squared, marital status categories (never married, married, widowed, divorced), education level, subjective health, satisfaction with friendship, and values thought to bring happiness (Success, Work, Health, Love, Money, and Others) and 18 dummy variables for each survey year.

5.4. Potential Issues in the Work Domain

The notably lower happiness of working women, regardless of age group, educational attainment, or marital status, suggests that no subgroup of working women is immune to this disadvantage. These results imply that women may experience lower happiness due to issues related to either their work or home domains. In this section, we first examine job satisfaction among working women in Türkiye compared to working men to determine whether the work domain contributes to this happiness disadvantage. Over the entire sample period, working women's average job satisfaction score is 3.73 (SD = 0.79), while that of men is 3.69 (SD = 0.82). We conducted regression analyses using models similar to those in Table 2, but with a focus on comparing job satisfaction between working women and men. According to all five models in Table 5, except Model 2, working women report higher job satisfaction than men.

Table 5. OLS Regression Results for Job Satisfaction

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Woman (ref. Man)	0.036*** (0.005)	0.001 (0.005)	0.033*** (0.005)	0.034*** (0.005)	0.032*** (0.005)
Income		0.096*** (0.002)	0.091*** (0.002)	0.092*** (0.002)	0.088*** (0.002)
Public Sector				0.048*** (0.005)	0.051*** (0.005)
Employer (ref. Employee)					-0.004 (0.011)
Self-Employed					-0.131*** (0.007)
Unpaid family Worker					-0.064*** (0.010)
Basic Controls	-	-	+	+	
R-squared	0.001	0.030	0.098	0.099	0.102
N	126853	126853	123075	123075	123075

Notes: Robust standard errors are presented in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. The basic control variables: age, age squared, marital status categories (never married, married, widowed, divorced), education level, subjective health, satisfaction with friendship, and values thought to bring happiness (Success, Work, Health, Love, Money, and Others) and 18 dummy variables for each survey year.

We investigate the satisfaction of working women with their earnings compared to that of working men. On average, over the entire sample period, working women reported a satisfaction with earnings score of 3.40 (SD = 1.31), whereas men reported a satisfaction level of 3.06 (SD = 1.07). Using regression analysis with models similar to those outlined in Table 2, we compare the earnings satisfaction of working women with that of men. Across all five models presented in Appendix Table A-4, working women consistently report higher earnings satisfaction than their male counterparts. Therefore, it is unlikely that the lower happiness reported by working women is attributable to issues within the work domain.

5.5. Potential Issues in the Home Domain

As working women generally do not report significantly lower job satisfaction or satisfaction with earnings, these findings lead us to investigate whether the observed happiness disadvantage is linked to challenges within the home domain. There are indications suggesting that domestic issues, particularly related to marriage, is a factor. For instance, the coefficient for being a working woman on happiness is notably negative for married women compared to those with other marital statuses. Therefore, this section examines the marital satisfaction of working women compared to homemakers to understand the potential role of the domestic sphere in the observed happiness disparity.

To address this issue, we first narrowed the sample to married women and distinguished between those working outside the home and those in the homemaker role. The average marital satisfaction score for working women over the entire sample period was 4.04 (SD = 0.64), whereas that for homemakers was 4.03 (SD = 0.60). We performed regression analysis using models similar to those outlined in Table 2, and the results are presented in Table 6. Model 1 in Table 6 shows no significant difference in marital satisfaction between working women and homemakers. However, the last four models in Table 5, which account for income, reveal that working women experience lower marital satisfaction than homemakers. These results suggest that marital dissatisfaction may contribute to the happiness disparity between working women vis-à-vis homemakers.

Table 6. OLS Regression Results for Marital Satisfaction

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Working Woman (ref. Homemaker)	0.005 (0.005)	-0.041*** (0.005)	-0.044*** (0.005)	-0.047*** (0.007)	-0.090*** (0.008)
Income		0.046*** (0.001)	0.034*** (0.001)	0.034*** (0.001)	0.037*** (0.001)
Public Sector				0.005 (0.008)	-0.004 (0.009)
Employer (ref. Employee)					0.070*** (0.027)
Self-Employed					-0.005 (0.017)
Unpaid family Worker					0.146*** (0.010)
Basic Controls	-	-	+	+	+
R-squared	0.001	0.010	0.092	0.092	0.093
N	127657	127657	125350	125350	125350

Notes: Robust standard errors are presented in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. The basic control variables: age, age squared, education level, subjective health, satisfaction with friendship, and values thought to bring happiness (Success, Work, Health, Love, Money, and Others) and 18 dummy variables for each survey year.

6. Discussion

In this study, based on Life Satisfaction Survey (LSS) data collected between 2004 and 2022, we demonstrate that working women are less happy than homemakers. This happiness gap in favor of homemakers is consistently observed across all survey years, particularly after 2010. Similar results have been found in studies conducted in various countries (see Başlevent & Kirmanoğlu, 2017; Booth & Van Ours, 2009; Sato, 2022; Treas et al., 2011).

The magnitude of the happiness gap between working and homemaker women was 0.048–0.148 on a 5-point scale. Booth and Van Ours (2009) estimated that working full-time reduces women's life satisfaction by 0.25 on a 10-point scale, accounting for individual fixed effects. Sato (2022) reported that homemakers in Japan experience a higher level of happiness than working women, with the difference ranging from 0.08 to 0.37 on a 5-point scale. Başlevent & Kirmanoğlu (2017) found a happiness disadvantage of 0.02 for working women in European countries after controlling for various background variables. However, this disadvantage is more pronounced in countries with lower Global

Gender Gap Index values, such as Albania, Hungary, and Italy. In Türkiye, the happiness gap between European and Japanese experiences—neither as high as in Japan nor as low as in Europe.

To contextualize the size of the happiness gap, being unemployed is associated with a 0.21–0.35 point decrease in happiness on a 5-point scale in Türkiye (Ugur, 2023). This suggests that the happiness disadvantage of working women compared to homemakers is about 25% of the gap between unemployed and employed individuals.

Başlevent & Kirmanoğlu (2017) attribute the happiness gap to working women comparing themselves to men, which hints at potential discrimination or dissatisfaction in the work domain. However, our results do not support this argument. Our study finds that working women in Türkiye are more satisfied with their jobs and earnings compared to their male counterparts (see Table 5 and Appendix Table A-4). This pattern was also observed in Clark (1997) for British women. Additionally, the public sector variable is not statistically significant, suggesting that the relative unhappiness with working outside the home is not related to adverse working conditions in the private sector. Furthermore, domain satisfaction with work does not significantly contribute to women's overall happiness compared to other domains such as family and health satisfaction (Milovanska-Farrington & Farrington, 2022).

Our findings also indicate that although social disapproval related to employment is not a widespread issue—96% of working women report not feeling social pressure—gender-based social pressure seems to contribute to the happiness disadvantage experienced by working women. This observation elaborates on Jayachandran (2021) analysis, which suggested that social norms may discourage women from working in the first place. Even when women choose to work, they may still be negatively influenced by social disapproval to some extent. Furthermore, as illustrated in Figure A-1, feelings of social pressure due to gender are increasing for both homemakers and working women, which is concerning.

Other researchers attribute the happiness gap between homemakers and working women to conflicts arising from persistent domestic responsibilities. Sato (2022) highlighted that this disparity is largely due to the presence of children and gender-biased parental responsibilities. Similarly, Booth and Van Ours (2009) observed in Australia that even in households where women undertake most of the market work, men do not significantly increase their share of housework. This pattern helps explain the challenges faced by full-time working women in Australia.

Our findings further support the notion that working women face significant issues in the home domain, as evidenced by their lower marital satisfaction, particularly in households with higher incomes (see Table 6). Married working women experience the greatest happiness disadvantage, whereas this gap is only weakly significant for widowed and never-married women. Another relevant finding is that the coefficient for being an unpaid family worker is large and positive, suggesting that working for the family is not problematic, whereas being an employee has a large negative coefficient. Consistent with this, Sanin (2023) demonstrated that working for family output reduces domestic violence, whereas employment is linked to increased domestic violence in sub-Saharan Africa (Cools & Kotsadam, 2017), India (Eswaran & Malhotra, 2011), Spain (Alonso-Borrego & Carrasco, 2017) and Türkiye (Erten & Keskin, 2021). Additionally, there is extensive literature documenting the trade-off between labor market success and marital outcomes, especially for women in high-status careers (Fisman et al., 2006; Folke & Rickne, 2020; Hitsch et al., 2010). Ermiş-Mert (2017) noted that married women in Türkiye were largely excluded from prestigious, traditionally male-dominated professions, and women in high-status jobs tended to have fewer children, possibly to maintain their competitive status.

Given that working overtime is common in the Turkish labor market (OECD, 2022) and that it undermines work-life balance in the Turkish context (Ugur, 2018), working women may be particularly affected by the reduced time available for social relationships (Nomaguchi et al., 2005). Satisfaction with family life has the largest impact on overall life satisfaction (Milovanska-Farrington & Farrington, 2022; Rojas, 2006), suggesting that lower marital satisfaction significantly affects the overall happiness of working women.

Similar to Japan, Türkiye exhibits a significant imbalance in the sharing of domestic responsibilities between men and women within the household (TURKSTAT, 2020). Even women with high-status jobs are not exempt from this gendered division of domestic duties, which tends to persist and is difficult to change (Ugur et al., 2023). Therefore, it is understandable that women across different work statuses—whether working in the public sector, being employers, or self-employed—do not show substantial differences in levels of happiness.

These findings do not suggest that homemakers are free from challenges. Numerous studies highlight issues such as poverty, deprivation, violence, and limited access to resources affecting women in Türkiye and around the world (see Alesina et al. (2013); Erten and Keskin (2018); Yeşilsoy and Arslanoğlu (2022)). These problems may be exacerbated by the invisibility and undervaluation of homemakers' work (Daniels, 1987; Yeşilsoy & Arslanoğlu, 2022). The higher reported happiness among homemakers might be a result of socialization processes where these women were conditioned to find contentment in their roles. While economists often interpret revealed preferences as reflecting

individuals' best interests, it is important to recognize that feminists have long argued that these preferences are not formed in isolation; social expectations significantly influence women's preferences for paid work (Kabeer, 2020).

An individual with objectively better conditions may lead to a more comfortable and satisfying life than someone with less advantageous circumstances. However, Kahneman (1999) points out that people in better conditions might not recognize this because they might set higher aspirations for happiness. In this context, the tendency of working women to evaluate their own situations more negatively than homemakers could be attributed to high standards for happiness or to the phenomenon known as the 'hedonic treadmill effect' (Myers, 1992).

A notable criticism of these findings concerns the reliability of self-reported data when evaluating wellbeing. There may be concerns that the results could be influenced by homemaker women conforming to societal expectations, which might not authentically capture the homemaker woman's genuine happiness advantage. Nevertheless, Frey and Stutzer (2010) demonstrated that self-reported happiness outcomes generally align with objective measures of happiness.

Some limitations of this study should be noted. While the study provides an overview of general work life contours, it does not account for certain factors, such as specific professions, working hours, and earning disparities, which could be influential. The survey lacks questions on these aspects; thus, we cannot determine their impact on the unhappiness of working women compared to homemakers. Additionally, despite including a comprehensive set of variables in the regression analysis, there may be unobservable factors, such as personality traits, that differ between working women and homemakers. Moreover, due to the nature of the pooled cross-sectional dataset, causal relationships cannot be established. In other words, this study cannot conclude that working outside causally reduces women's happiness.

7. Conclusion

Examining Life Satisfaction Survey data from 2004 to 2022, our study reveals a persistent happiness gap favoring homemaker women over working women in Türkiye, a trend that has become notably pronounced since 2010. This finding contradicts the conventional expectation that working women, who typically have higher incomes, would experience improved personal and social standing due to increased bargaining power. Our results are consistent with similar findings observed in other countries.

Interestingly, our data show that working women report higher job and earnings satisfaction compared to their male counterparts, challenging the idea that issues within the work domain drive the happiness disparity. Instead, our study suggests potential challenges within the home domain, highlighting a possible trade-off between women's work and life quality at home.

The increasing number of women in the labor market reflects social change in Türkiye. The response to this shift is not overwhelmingly negative, as approximately 80% of working women report never feeling social pressure related to their employment or gender. However, the study indicates that social pressure contributes to the happiness disadvantage experienced by working women. Overall, the happiness differential reflects the costs of social change borne by working women.

As women's labor force participation is expected to rise in Türkiye, it is crucial to take steps to create a more equitable and supportive home environment for all women, including those who are working.

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Appendix

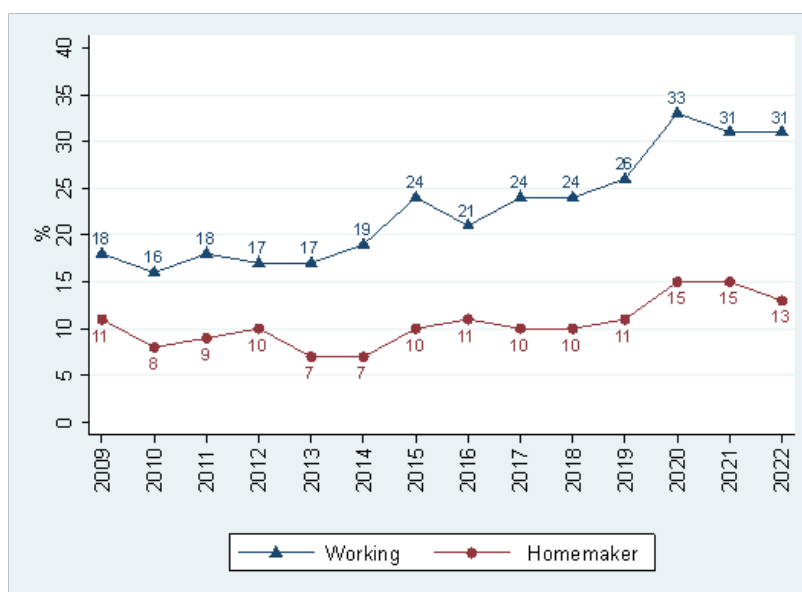


Figure A 1. Percentage of Feeling Some Social Pressure Due to Gender Over the Years

Table A 1. Ordered Probit Results for Happiness

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Working Woman (ref. Homemaker)	-0.059*** (0.007)	-0.172*** (0.007)	-0.130*** (0.008)	-0.139*** (0.011)	-0.208*** (0.012)
Income		0.108*** (0.002)	0.092*** (0.002)	0.092*** (0.002)	0.098*** (0.002)
Public Sector				0.015 (0.013)	0.005 (0.013)
Employer (ref. Employee)					0.070 (0.046)
Self-Employed					0.019 (0.024)
Unpaid family Worker					0.249*** (0.017)
Basic Controls	-	-	+	+	+
Pseudo R-squared	0.002	0.008	0.071	0.071	0.071
N	157122	157122	154126	154126	154126

Notes: Robust standard errors are presented in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. The basic control variables: age, age squared, marital status categories (never married, married, widowed, divorced), education level, subjective health, satisfaction with friendship, values thought to bring happiness (Success, Work, Health, Love, Money, and Others) and 18 dummy variables for each survey year.

The marginal effects calculated from Model 1 in Table A.1 show that compared with homemakers, working women are 1% and 1.2% less likely to be very happy and happy, respectively. In addition, compared to homemakers, working women are 0.3% and 0.7% more likely to be very unhappy and unhappy, respectively. Working women are 1.2% more likely to be neither happy nor unhappy compared to homemakers.

Table A 2. Marginal Effects from Ordered Probit Results on Happiness

	Very unhappy	Unhappy	Neither Happy nor unhappy	Happy	Very Happy
Model 1					
Working Woman (ref. Homemaker)	.003 (.000)	.007 (.001)	.012 (.001)	-.013 (.002)	-.010 (.001)
Model 2					
Working Woman (ref. Homemaker)	.009 (.000)	.020 (.001)	.034 (.001)	-.035 (.001)	-.027 (.001)
Model 3					
Working Woman (ref. Homemaker)	.007 (.000)	.015 (.001)	.026 (.002)	-.026 (.001)	-.021 (.001)

Table A 3. OLS Regression Results for Happiness, Other Coefficients

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Age			-0.029*** (0.001)	-0.029*** (0.001)	-0.029*** (0.001)
Age squared			0.000*** (0.000)	0.000*** (0.000)	0.000*** (0.000)
Education level			0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.003)	0.010*** (0.003)
Never married			0.264*** (0.003)	0.264*** (0.003)	0.264*** (0.003)
Married (ref. Divorced)			0.205*** (0.005)	0.205*** (0.005)	0.204*** (0.005)
Widowed			0.242*** (0.016)	0.242*** (0.016)	0.235*** (0.016)
Satisfaction with Friendship			0.486*** (0.014)	0.486*** (0.014)	0.469*** (0.014)
Subjective Health			0.162*** (0.017)	0.162*** (0.017)	0.153*** (0.017)
Success (ref. Other)			-0.001 (0.024)	-0.001 (0.024)	0.001 (0.024)
Work			-0.130*** (0.029)	-0.130*** (0.029)	-0.131*** (0.029)
Health			0.109*** (0.021)	0.108*** (0.021)	0.107*** (0.021)
Love			0.129*** (0.022)	0.128*** (0.022)	0.126*** (0.022)
Money			-0.255*** (0.025)	-0.255*** (0.025)	-0.255*** (0.025)
Constant	3.602*** (0.002)	3.417*** (0.004)	1.726*** (0.041)	1.725*** (0.041)	1.722*** (0.041)
R-squared	0.001	0.018	0.163	0.163	0.164
N	157122	157122	154126	154126	154126

Notes: Robust standard errors appear in parentheses; * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$. For Models 3, 4, and 5, 18-year dummy variables for each survey year were added to the model, with the reference year set as 2004. We do not provide the coefficients of year dummies are not provided to save space.

Table A 4. OLS Regression Results for Satisfaction with Earnings

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Woman (ref. Man)	0.336*** (0.008)	0.348*** (0.008)	0.348*** (0.008)	0.348*** (0.008)	0.032*** (0.008)
Income		0.121*** (0.003)	0.121*** (0.003)	0.121*** (0.003)	0.155*** (0.003)
Public Sector				-0.008 (0.008)	-0.014* (0.007)
Employer (ref. Employee)					0.138*** (0.013)
Self-Employed					-0.033*** (0.008)
Unpaid family Worker					1.599*** (0.018)
Basic Controls	-	-	+	+	+
R-squared	0.017	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.182
N	126853	123075	123075	123075	123075

Notes: Robust standard errors are presented in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. The basic control variables: age, age squared, marital status categories (never married, married, widowed, divorced), education level, subjective health, satisfaction with friendship, values thought to bring happiness (Success, Work, Health, Love, Money, and Others) and 18 dummy variables for each survey year.