

*Derleme*

## FEMALE EMPLOYMENT AND GENDER INEQUALITY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN TURKEY

### Türkiye’de Karşılaşılan Zorlukları ve Fırsatları Bakımından Kadın İstihdamı ve Cinsiyet Eşitsizliği

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#### ÖZET

Bir ülkedeki cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin varlığı sosyoekonomik doku içerisinde nasıl açıklanabilir? Bu sorunun cevabı ataerkilliğin yanı sıra kültürel, demografik ve sosyal norm ile değerlere dayalı nesiller arası ve etkileşimsel ilişkiler üzerinden verilebilir. Doğrusunu söylemek gerekirse, işgücüne yönelik arz ve talebin yapısındaki bir dizi değişiklik gelişmiş ülkelerde, başta toplumsal cinsiyet şablonlarının (stereotiplerinin) statüsü olmak üzere etkin işgücü piyasalarının işaret fişeği olma işlevi görmüştür. Ancak buradaki sorun kadının işgücü piyasasındaki rol ve statülerinin gelişmekte olan ülkelerde kaynak ve ücret dağılım süreçlerinin neden gerisinde kaldığıdır. Bununla birlikte, benzer

dönüşümler Türkiye’de de yaşanmaktadır. Ancak, toplulaştırılmış veriler kadın istihdamının ve işgücüne katılım oranının işbölümü açısından hala özel olarak incelenmeyi gerektirdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma kadınların Türkiye’de karşı karşıya olduğu demografik ve sosyal yapılarla ilişkin değer ve normlardaki farklılıklar bakımından kadın istihdamı ile ekonomik eşitsizlik arasındaki ilişkiyi ele almaktadır. Bu bağlamda en olumlu yolun daha fazla kadına iş sağlanmasına yönelik aktif işgücü piyasası politikalarının benimsenmesi ve sürdürülmesi olduğu düşünülmektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Kadın İstihdamı, cinsiyet eşitsizliği, ayrımcılık

#### ABSTRACT

How the existence of gender inequality in a country can be explained in socio-economic patterns? Part of the answer relies on intergenerational and interactional relations based on cultural, demographic and social norms and values as well as patriarchy. Indeed, many changes in demand for and supply of labor have led to efficient labor market transforms especially in the status of gender stereotypes in advanced countries. But the point is why women’s roles and statuses in the labor market lag behind in distribution of resources and wages in developing countries? However, similar transformations have taken into account in Turkey in such cases. But it is understood from the aggregate data that female employment and labor force participation still need special consideration in terms of division of labor. This study looks at the relationship between female employment and economic inequality in terms of differences in demographic and social structure of the values and norms women faces in Turkey. The most affirmative way is to adopt and maintain active labor market policies for recruiting more female workers.

**Keywords:** Female employment, gender inequality, discrimination

## INTRODUCTION

*[Women] have a right to work wherever they want to- as long as they have dinner ready when you get home – John Wayne*

There has been a growing literature on the level of national and international differences in gender inequality from income and socio-economic points (see for detailed information Brandolini and Smeeding, 2009; Smeeding 2006; Smeeding and Rainwater, 2004; Esping-Andersen, 2007). The main determinants of growing income inequality are wage gaps, level of unemployment, unflexible employment and segregations in occupations (Gregg and Wadsworth, 2003). Since flexible employment is mostly used in informal labor market with absence of social security, the key target should be recovering the women's engagement in the labor force by security covered flexible job opportunities. Therefore, flexible employment continuously reproduces the unfavorable conditions under which women currently face inadequate labor force participation and unequal opportunities in job seeking, without changing their current satisfaction and opportunity level. Since tasks and documents concerning the female employment are only conducted by governments and non-governmental organizations specific targets must be adopted in promoting women employment with creating new job opportunities, providing sufficient working conditions and training them. Yet the role of female employment, income inequality and polarization of women into the same jobs still remain at the same level and requires urgent attention.

In a mostly capitalized world, employment becomes a vital for both economic and social problems. For a stable economic growth and environment, the female participation is evidently essential. This paper considers the economic, political, cultural and social reasons behind the question of why the female employment is lower in Turkey which is a crucial issue. Since there are countless papers in the literature about the female employment, much attention has been assigned to analyzing how rising of female employment affect the succession process of the economies. This work also combines supportive policies with challenges female labors face and special attention will be given to the importance of female existence in the labor market.

After the Second World War the gender segregation has started across countries and male are accepted as the ideal type citizen. Of course the reason behind is obviously patriarchal attitudes and understanding which defines the gender roles in the family as male are the breadwinners and the female are the unpaid /domestic family workers. Consequently, the unequal sexual division of labor becomes an inevitable result of the capitalist and social-democratic countries (Orloff, 1993). On the contrary, the social-democratic welfare systems are expected to create more social and economically egalitarian society. Unfortunately, women could not integrate into this multi-layered political and economic structure properly and are left outside of the system.

Since the last two decades, feminists and activists try to predicate the importance of women in the labor market and start many campaigns and events

with the help of governments, non-governmental organizations and unions. The major aim is to integrate women into the labor market which will be ensured with an economic independence. Esping-Andersen defines this emancipatory transaction as “defamilialization” (Orloff, 1993). Therefore, the traditional conservative interpretation of gender roles threatens the economic, political and social stability. The problem of Turkey in the low level of female employment is the unchanged patriarchal and traditional division of gender roles both in the regions and in the country as a whole. In general, the housework is accepted as unpaid family work and does not have a financial equivalence. So they are accepted into the society as inferior and worthless work (Toksöz, 2007). This unpaid work could be classified in the informal sector since there is no wage, social insurance and benefits.

In many countries, women catch up with men in terms of human capital accumulation and equity. The gender gap is declining both in wage gap and occupational choices (Heathcote et al. 2010). The economic empowerment women gain has resulted in a powerful, effective, universal and non-discriminatory gendered discourse. However, female violence and gender abuse in contradiction to the implementation of human rights theory shows a declining trend. Therefore, studies have suggested that the gender revolutionary and recognition of women's rights as human rights influence men's civil, cultural, political views and preferences toward the redistribution of power between men and women (Warner, 1991; Washington, 2004 and Greenwood, 2004). Aizer

(2010) suggests an economic theory of household bargaining that an increase in woman's wage will lead to an increase in her bargaining power. On Sen's paper, deprivations suffered by women are best understood as a contradiction arising between practical and legal realms. Sen pays special attention on a comparative basis for examining the status of women and why they are neglected and afforded in acknowledgement of political, economic and social participation and leadership of women. But the picture is totally opposite in Turkey. Conservatism and cultural beliefs are acceding the control over women's position both in economic and social life.

This paper tries to shed light on the lessons learned from the challenges women face and social policies will be addressed to promote female labor, changing economic and political policies with an emphasis on Turkey. Yet, patriarchal contract among gender as well as less educated and skilled labor force among women are still problems. Although social and economic reinforcements pertaining to women's position and well-being seem to be changing due to international regulations, still harassment, abuse, discrimination, dowry, violence, beating and inequality are high and women are suffering from these issues. Additionally, if the framework of human rights are not integrated to the international laws, these laws have to be changed and adapted to the universal norms locally. So education of women with low fertility, high employment and access to internationally accepted regulations will increase women's empowerment and Rights as well as their employability in the societies.

### THE GENDER GAP IN THE LIGHT OF EQUALITY

Woman-centered policies have proliferated at a high scale in the past forty years, including the global spread of women's policy agencies (True and Mintrom 2001); gender quotas (Krook 2009); violence against women legislation (Htun and Weldon 2012), gender mainstreaming and even women's peacebuilding activities (Ellerby 2011). The accrual of policies both in Economic and social level indicate changing ideas and priorities about women's access to employment, decision-making positions, the promotion of women's rights and interests.

The rise of capitalism, along with the principles of enlightenment focusing on reason, rationality and individualism are products of remunerated work which has been formed outside of the family work. The sex division of labor as separating it into employment and family life is not new but affect the women's economic and social power. Indeed, divisions of labor in a capitalized economy, forming the hierarchical categories of labor to maximize production level is in the interest of people that benefit most from this system. Although the division of labor is classified in terms of classes in capitalist system, it is determined by gender division. This imposes distinctions among gender labors either by socially or economically, especially causes a huge difference between non-domestic and domestic workers. As a result of this, male-favoured gender mentality of the society that is argued by the radical feminist theory is still constructed. However, with the lack of valuation and social norms against the domestic workers, women's work is

exemplified in terms of wage domestic work and unwaged domestic work in the capitalist framework. All in all, capitalism is a system that poignantly relies on the shoulders of the unpaid labors and in general, most of the unpaid labors are women.

Housework as women's work<sup>1</sup> can be delineated within the capitalist division of labor in two versions: firstly, as a form of production, providing surplus value and un-waged work to support production outside of the home and secondly, as a form of production by reproducing laborers and inculcating values to enable engagement of produced into capitalist division of labor. As a result, the un-waged status of domestic labor serves productive functions within the capitalist economy. So the gender-based divisions of labor within and outside households has meant that women are more vulnerable to poverty compared to men even when they reside in the same household and are members of the same family (Togrul, 2007).

Thus, women need a liberation separately both from patriarchal domination and the in the low level of wage earning. But it could only happen when the definitions and the understandings from family, responsibility for children and household work are constructed again. In addition to these conditions, women must be aware of the roles enacted for them in life and retrieve from the economic subordination.

Becker's research (1957) on employment discrimination started with employer's personal choices and preferences as an inception of discrimination. He stated that some workers had

a tendency towards this discrimination and would be willing to surrender this tendency. Therefore, work-owners with this tendency towards discrimination would hire less women than the profit-maximizing number and instead more men would be hired even the skills are fully equalized. So work-owners who discriminate against women discard the profit in terms of their willingness on discrimination. As a result the wage gap between men and women with equal experiences and education would expand if the discriminatory policies followed are not changed.<sup>2</sup>

The problem in Turkey is the not different. For the most part, the sex segregation and female-male wage differences persist. The regulations of the labour market have an important impact on participation rates, but without labor market segmentations as concentrating on dual labor market, efficiency wages and/or occupational overcrowding, the system will never work systematically. Differences in work hour discrepancies as well as income inequalities are usually explained from the choices of people (Reynolds and Aletraris, 2006). Eventhough Parsons and Bales (1955) explain that the sex division of labor is functional due to eliminating the competition between husband and wife, women still have to seriously compete with the occupational segregation, they are competing with their husbands which will undermine the adhesion and solidarity of them. Workers of both sexes are generally influenced by cultural and social beliefs concerning the expected behaviors of women and men in the societies (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). These cultural differences, of course, shape the behaviour of individuals as well as women

implicitly or explicitly. The stereotypical beliefs, especially in cultural schema, will affect women's socialization and they perform less willing to be in the labor market.

### **Labor Market Analysis from Gender Perceptions**

#### **Gendered Economic Schemas**

Research on women's employment in Turkey began in the midst of eighties and it was influenced from the second wave of feminist movement in the world. Boserup's (1970) marginalization thesis was used to explain why the level of women's participation was low and how it was stabilized in non-agricultural and unpaid activities (Özbay, 1998).

In 1980s, within the context of globalization and structural adjustment policies in many countries, flexibility is the new form of informal employment and female participants have been evaluated in this category, especially in many developing countries labor market. Purportedly, this would be resulted in an increase in women's labor force participation. As a result, a rise in male unemployment and a decrease in female unemployment could be observed (Standing, 1999). But the problem is that most of the Middle Eastern countries as well as Turkey differ from most of the developing countries as already implied. The female labor force participation rates are still lower. So debate is in the middle. Only just in last decade, women's share in total employment has started to show an increasing trend in these countries especially in Arab countries (UN, 1999). This rate in Turkey which is higher compared to others with approximately 32 percent

in 2013 has not shown an excessive increase since last decade. In other words, the informal jobs provided for women are heavily restricted to some particular areas of economic activities like manufacturing, service sector, health-care, cleaning, primary teaching, nursing etc. However, another reason for women which makes a negative impact on being in the labor market is the lower wages.

According to the recent statistics about the changes in the male and female employment rates from 2000 to 2012 in Mediterranean countries of Spain, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Turkey by OECD in 2012 (Buğra and Yakut-Çakar, 2010), it can be indicated that both male and female employment rates are stably increasing in all countries except Turkey. The rates show an increasing proportion till 2003, but later the employment rates start to mitigate continuously until 2010. After the policies taken into consideration for enhancing female labors in the market, the female employment again starts to increase and reaches its peak level with approximately 32 percent. From the statistics, it can be understood that it figures out a U-shaped labor force function. But the problem here indeed is why Turkey draws a very different path although the other four countries experience similar economic fluctuations and/or instabilities as well as the effects of crisis of 2008.<sup>3</sup>

As can be seen in Table 1 above, in the observed periods female labor force participation rate in rural areas keeps on decreasing whilst the opposite happens in urban areas. The number of women not in the labor force continue to increase in all years. The main

reasons could be classified as attending a school/university, unpaid family work, cultural factors, could not find a job or not looking any more (discouraged workers). The percentages of reasons why women are not in the labor force is given below.

The studies dealing with the changes in the labor force in manufacturing industry and the influence of structural adjustment policies in Turkey have not indicated any notable alteration in the position of the females (Ecevit, 1998a). However, in the beginning of 1980s, Turkey decided to adopt a new strategic international policy and replaced import substituting industrialization with market oriented economic model which led economic deregulations, privatization and urbanization associated with liberalization of trade. So with a new economic tendency towards minimal state policy, Turkish government leaves the economy to private sectors by the policies that favour the capitalist company owners. That is to say, the economic transfer from import industrialization to export oriented industrialization has been started. The liberalization in the economy provides new opportunities for female employees, but since the quality of jobs mitigate with low-wage policies, long working hours, inconvenient working places, less and less women want to be in the labor market. Consequently, the privatization causes an increase in male employment by inducing women to be out of the labor force.

According to the table above, total employment expanded only by 3.911.000 within the seventeen year period. As far as the females are the main object, there is a considerable decline in agricultural

Table 1. Shares of labor force between 1995 – 2012, as of percentage and units.

	1995		2000		2005		2010		2012	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Female Labor Force	446	2043	3809	2379	3310	3043	2987	4396	3228	4964
Male Labor Force	7407	8672	7093	9797	9857	11356	5549	12709	5925	13222
Female Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	49,3	17,1	40,2	17,2	33,7	19,3	36,3	23,7	36,9	26,1
Male Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	86,3	74,5	77,9	70,9	73,5	71,5	71,6	70,4	71,2	71
Females not in the Labor Force	4567	9871	5669	11439	6506	12759	5233	14124	5512	14068
Males not in the Labor Force	1486	2964	2011	4015	2476	4520	2196	5348	2402	5402

Source: DIE, October 1996, TUIK, 2005 and 2013.

**Table 2. Reasons why women are not in the labor force, 2012**

	Urban		Rural	
	thousand	As of %	thousand	As of %
Female not in the labor force	14068	100	5512	100
Not seeking a job	735	5,2	317	5,8
Working seasonally	16	0,1	34	0,6
Domestic work/housewife	8743	62,1	3249	58,9
Education/Training	1667	11,9	486	8,8
Retired	760	5,4	76	1,4
Disabled/old	1034	7,4	1147	20,8
Other	1113	7,9	203	3,7

**Source:** TUIK, 2013.

sector by 1.704.000 people with a ratio of 37,4 decrease. But the share of service sector shows an increasing trend and goes up to 45,9 percent from 9,5 percent. While agricultural share declines and the share of nonagricultural labor force in total labor force increases, the share of industrial employment changes a little and the increase takes place visibly in services sector. That indicates that the share of female employment in the service sector especially in banking, insurance services and private teaching institutions where women could find more qualified jobs has increased around the world. The reflections of this opportunity in expanding service sector also enhance Turkish female workers to be in the labor force. For instance, the ratio of women employed increased from 40 percent in 1995 to 52 percent in 2005 and reached its peak in 2011 with 58 percent in private banks. ([www.tbb.org.tr](http://www.tbb.org.tr)).

Indeed, there is a reason in the declining ratios of employment in

agricultural sector for both women and men. Agricultural policies prosecuted by Turkey with the changes in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> development programmes which are directly correlated to the policies of World Bank, European Union and World Trade Organization involve reducing the number of people working in this sector. So government start to preclude the subsidies and support to the farmers and producing domestic agricultural products by domestic farmers are nearly terminated. Emancipating the cotton import and putting the same floor price to the sugar beet, tobacco and hazelnut for the last three years affect the farmers and they have resort to reduce the land area and produce hardly ever. Due to the enactment of law about the crops in 2001, there have been relatively high decline in the productions and employment affiliated to land (Gülçubuk et al, 2005). Although female workers are used to work as unpaid family workers with no value and/or marginal productivity to the economy, this transformation affects them



Table 3. Distribution of economic activity by sex and years	Total employment						activity by sex and years							
	1995		2000		2005		2012		Female			Male		
	1995	2000	2005	2012	1995	2000	2005	2012	1995	2000	2005	2012		
Total	20912	21580	20067	24823	5977	5800	5108	7311	14935	15780	14959	17512		
Agriculture	9526	7769	5154	6097	4576	3508	2367	2872	4950	4261	2787	3225		
Share of Agriculture	45,6	36	25,6	24,6	76,6	60,5	46,3	39,2	33,2	27,1	18,6	18,5		
Industry	4861	5174	5290	6460	834	763	846	1089	4027	4411	4444	5371		
Share of Industry	23,2	24	26,4	26	13,9	13,2	16,6	14,9	26,9	27,9	29,7	30,6		
Service	6525	8637	9623	12266	567	1529	1895	3350	5958	7108	7728	8916		
Share of Service	52,2	40	48	49,4	9,5	26,3	37,1	45,9	39,9	45	51,7	50,9		

Source: TÜİK; 2000, 2006 and 2013.

more since they are commonly involved in this sector, especially in rural areas.

On the other hand, in countries where the agricultural sector is the major area for the employment for both men and women, the female labor force is very low outside the agricultural sector. Therefore, female labor force participation is influenced by numerous demographical, cultural and social factors including women's responsibilities and decision making mechanism in the family (Tzannatos, 1999). In this respect, all of those explanations are the situations faced by women workers in Turkey. Women who are generally engaged in rural areas find themselves outside the production process in the urban areas when anyhow they migrate. The reason behind is not only the ineligible working opportunities but also they are not forced or enhanced to be in the labor market by virtue of the existing patriarchal thinking.

So long as the effect of age has a negative factor for female employment, government should enhance the job opportunities for older women. The female labor force decreases in urban areas after aged 35 since most of the women are married between the ages of 25-34. So they withdraw from the employment by reason of childcare, household responsibilities or husbands' desire. They want to return to the labor market after their 35s, but it would become more difficult to find a job than it was and gradually give up looking for jobs. As to the table 4 below, the highest participation among women could be observed between the ages of 20 and 34.

On the other hand, marital status of women is another critical factor for

employers to offer the jobs to women even if they are highly competitive, well-informed, educated and/or skilled. Women in Turkey generally suffer from the cultural attitudes and values towards their employment that directly related to the patriarchal prejudgements. Hence, it is impossible to assume optimistic results for women in regard to meaningless perceptions, prejudgements and values.

However, jobs in business and finance sector could only be accessible for women if they provide a certain level of education. As the education level of women increases, employment ratio appears to be higher. It can be stated that education as a factor do not only actuate the wage increase and ease to increase the opportunity of finding job easier for women but also ensuring them legal rights in terms of any challenges either in business life or in the society (Toksöz, 2007). On the other hand, the level of schooling is still very low for women although progress in enrollment has been made over the past decades by UNESCO in terms of the state-sponsored education campaigns to increase the level of education for girls and women, the share of female enrollment is still low when compared to the many European countries (Ince, 2010).

As table 5 shows above, Turkey could yet not augment universal educational level even at primary level. In 2012, 1,1 percent of female and 1,2 percent of male at primary level are still out of schooling. School enrolment rates drop significantly at high school and higher education levels and at each level rates of enrolment of girls are very low.

**Table 4. Employment level by age groups in Turkey, 2012.**

	Female		Male	
	Thousand	As of % share	Thousand	As of % share
15-19	108	13,72	218	12,62
20-34	429	55,31	792	45,86
35-44	192	24,73	573	33,18
45-54	46	6,16	85	4,92
55+	6,5	0,08	59	3,42
Total	781,5	100	1727	100

Source: TUIK, 2013.

#### **Gendered Social and Cultural Schemas**

Social and political institutions with unions in Turkey do not trigger their legitimacy to empower women in the labor market. Before the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic in 1923, sex equality in social, economic and cultural life is heavily triggered by government policies in the eye of westernization. The major aim is to modernize the women and provide more opportunities to them in every stage of the lifespan. But transformations from patriarchy to a modern world are not easy. Not only cultural values, norms and faith people get used to esteem by decades, but also religion has a huge impact on the attitudes or apprehensions they exhibits. Divorce, bride shortage, polygamy, dowry abuse and female child abortions which are generally accepted in Muslim families as unrecorded laws in Turkey at those times are the subjects to illegalize by reformers and confine anyone who still do these above impacts. If those challenges are overcome, there would be a

significant social and economic change for women which are defined as Islamic reform in the degree of state feminism in the literature. Reforms are started by M.K.Atatürk in 1923 and are still continuing. Before 2002, the political parties rather choose to implement liberal economic policies and do not affect people with conservatism. But after 2002, with the appearance of a new conservative party to Turkish political life called as Justice and Development Party, the very conservative social and economic policies are being governed as before as if no reforms had been made for promoting women in the labor market. For instance, the policies are circulating around the issue of restraining women to home and to look after their children within home since the child care facilities are very limited and very expensive. Therefore, work from home could be more convenient for women in terms of working outside. However, it is not a liberating policy; in contrast it conduces to family-centered social policy. Consequently, more women are forced to work in informal sector due to discriminative attributes by employers

**Table 5. Schooling ratio by level of education**

	Total Enrolments	Female	Male
Primary education	98,86	98,92	98,81
Secondary education	93,09	92,98	93,19
High school	70,06	69,31	90,77
Higer education	38,5	38,4	38,61

**Source:** TUIK, 2013.

or their family. On the other hand, the regulated social security system reflects a very exclusivist items and it is obvious that the aim of these policies is not to promote the women's participation, indeed to force them to be out of the labor market. Although laws for the labor market have been regulated and acts have been changed depending upon the negotiations with European Union, they are not used properly especially by the employers and women are forced to work from home or work at home.

Another obstacle for low level of female employment is the lack of social services as the care policies for the children especially pre-school facilities and kindergarten, difficulties in finding nurserymaids for older and disabled people. These care-required people are looked after by the family members who are mostly women and they are constrained to give this care as a part of their family responsibilities. Most of them are not aware of the social care services that social welfare states must provide to those care-required people. But the opportunities especially for older and disabled groups are very limited in Turkey and government is not providing the sufficient policies

to increase the facilities for those groups. So women are the victims in the family as if that is their obligatory duty and have no chance apart from looking after them.

On the other hand, the unionization of women and their representation individually are not developed to the desired level in Turkey. Since last decades, there has been a notable increase in the number of non-governmental organizations. Every society based organizations assign a committee for women to promote their integration to the social and economic life. Some of them are TÜRK-İŞ (Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions), KESK (Confederation of Public Workers' Unions), KAGİD (Women Entrepreneur's Association) and KEİG (Women's Labour and Employment Initiative Platform). The major aims of all those associations are "unions to women and women to unions".

When the political lives of women are checked whether to be a female deputy is highly ranked or not, it can be indicated that the situation is the same with the other sectors. The Municipal Act was enacted in 1930 that enabled women to be in the politics. Therefore, women won the right to elect and to be

elected in Municipal elections. They gain the right to be elected in order to be the village headmen by the amendments reformed in the Village Law in 1933. For the first time in 1935, 18 women entered the parliament and the representation ratio of women in the parliament was 4.5 percent. Although this pioneering role of women at those times, the current status of women in the parliament compared to other countries is not satisfying. According to 2004 data, only 18 municipalities over 3225 have female mayors. Due to the 2011 elections, number of female representatives in the parliament increases from 50 to 78. Thus, Turkish Grand National Assembly has increased the ratio of female deputies to 14 percent in 2011 which was 9 percent in 2007. However, from 1935 until 2009, only 236 women entered the Assembly in return to 8794 men ([www.tbmm.gov.tr](http://www.tbmm.gov.tr)).

#### **Policies to ENHANCE FEMALE EMPLOYMENT**

The changes in all stages are in different way in Turkey compared to European Union members. Turkey does not have many problems in applying the fiscal and monetary policies, but it fails in engaging with the social alterations. The main reason here is the Islamic conservatism with its ideologies which is shaping the gender contracts. Further, although the policies implemented by the current government are international policy instruments to increase the social and economic welfare, gender equality does not seem to be a part of these instruments.

When the historical background of Turkey has been examined, special emphasis are given to create more

sustained jobs starting from 1990s by providing subsidies and decreasing taxes for entrepreneurs. The government premeditates employment strategies by pointing to the objectives and the targets to follow. The aim of promoting employment to higher levels is adapted to the annual action plans and policies which emphasize employability, entrepreneurship and equal opportunities. These three items have their own goals inside. Employability targets to sustain long-term employment among workers – especially women- and to enable of using active labor market policies in order to decrease youth unemployment. The entrepreneurship aims to regulate the tax conveniences, subsidies and compensation of any risks occur for the new start-ups. If these two are implemented in commensurately, the last instrument comes out. In order to uptick the participation rate of women people in the labor market, another policy that can be pursued is to harmonize the family and work life with activated employment incentives. Likewise, rigid policies and disincentives must be taken into consideration if the informal employment is considered as a real problem by the government. Therefore, Turkish government embarks upon reconciling the family and working life of women with the help of flexible form of employment. But whilst adapting this policy, government overlooks a point: gender inequality. Since the informal sector is growing unexpectedly, measurements easing women in access to the labor market deviates from its own path which result with gender-based division of work. So Turkey bears the consequences of implementing solely the flexible forms of employment as core employment strategy.

### **Employment Policies**

In Turkey, social policies are obtained to increase female labor participation. But when the point comes into enhancing gender equality in the labor market, most of them have failed in promoting female employment. The Labor Act accepted in 2003 to address the gender equality due to the changing demands was welcomed by women. Although the new act included equal pay for equal work and providing opportunities to pregnant women, unfortunately the equal treatment collapsed. The law fell behind in minimizing the gap in sex discrimination as well as the sexual harassment in the work place. Yet again, reversal of equal distribution in wages and division of labor by businesses have not showed the expected impact on women. Government starts to follow new policies and aims to eliminate the discrimination women face in training programs, promotions and low pay by providing equal opportunities in every sector. Since the discrimination occur in jobs where men have more experience with less or the same education level, women should be integrated into professional or managerial positions by providing jobs like learning by doing and/or on the job training opportunities.

### **Labor market regulations**

There are labor market regulations that eliminate discrimination against women by reinforcing the gender equality in female employment in the formal sector. Women still face more severe legal, regulatory and administrative barriers whilst starting and/or running businesses than do their male counterparts. So generally active labor market policies

succour to improving the employability of the female workers. The main goal of these programs is to allocate public resources to generate adequate employment opportunities and they can vary from training programs to the unemployed to wage subsidies (Auer et al., 2005). For the most, the ALMPs are more popular since passive labor market policies are expensive. Additionally, the effects of ALMPs are argued to be visible in shorter terms and more positive on employability (Van Ours, 2000).

### **Occupational sex segregation**

Jobs are segregated by sex undisputedly. Men generally have upper class, more prestigious and professional jobs than women do. On other side, women in general choose jobs as nursing, teaching, health care, child or elder care workers. Although women start to enter male-dominated jobs in recent year, still the number of female is very rare in the jobs such as carpenter, plumber or auto-mechanic. It is indeed the result of the demand and the supply side of the labor markets.

### **Concluding Remarks**

There are a number of reasons why women might have lower rates of labor market participation, which include economic, cultural and social factors. While the shift to service economy has increased the share of female employees over time in every country, the speed of this transformation varies significantly. The countries with higher rates of tertiarization have higher rates of female labor market participation as well. This is partly due to low skill requirements of service jobs and partly

due to increased labor demand. On the other hand, in Turkey since the bulk of unpaid work is carried out by women, the labor market participation remained to be relatively low. Women are mainly responsible for childcare, household work, elderly care and other forms of non-market activities. Since the division of labor is more gendered, women tend to stay at home or only work in family enterprises. The gender division of labor also affects the social policies and in Turkey with limited public provision of child and elderly care, the female employment is restricted further. On the other hand, the lack of educational attainment, the patriarchy and traditional family rules, unequal power distribution in the family structure, the burden of domestic works, the social discrimination against widow or divorced women, the lack of efficient wage opportunities, gender-based occupational segregation, the results of privatization, scarcity in creating sufficient employment as well as the conservative ideologies are the main reasons for the low level of female employment. These structural and social inequalities are intensified in crisis situations and women tend to withdraw from the labor market in greater numbers.

However, it is possible to say that Turkish gender policies have centralized on the creation of equal opportunities among genders by legal provisions. Therefore, the equal pay for equal work in association with gender equality policies is the main target in the Labor Act. But the problem is that the implementation of the Labor Act policies on female labor market activities are not well-organized and sustained. Thereby, even though economic

considerations are still relevant, active policies enhancing female employability must also be implemented in terms of socio-economic and cultural factors.

The choices selected to solve this dilemma could be successful only if women's employment and socio-economic status are promoted in both qualitative and quantitative terms. If still the family is considered as consecrated social institution in religion and conservative ideologies, solutions to problems to change gendered mentality and discrimination is obviously impossible. All in all, government should develop positive actions and policies in order to keep up the social reforms at worldwide level. Otherwise, instabilities and gender inequality in the labor market could not be overcome and the consequences of destruction on women's social, economic and cultural life are inevitable.

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## (Endnotes)

### 1 NOTES

1. The term could be used to refer to the concepts including as a whole:



preparing food, setting the table, serving meals, clearing food and dishes from the table, washing dishes, dressing her children, disciplining children, taking the children to childcare or school, gathering clothes for washing, going to the supermarket, ironing, keeping an eye on or playing with children, making beds, paying bills, caring for pets and plants, putting away toys, books and clothes, sewing or knitting, answering the telephone, cleaning the bathroom and the kitchen, and putting her children to bed etc.

- 2 Becker (1957), Goldberg (1982) and Heckman (1998) can be viewed for more detailed discussions regarding employment gap. Although empirical tests of Becker's hypothesis have focused on the narrowing of the employment gap with wage gap implied by the theory, this paper indeed focuses on how to narrow the employment gap between gender that are discriminated more.
- 3 The employment rate in a developing country may reflect the experience of educated middle-class urban female workers in a certain period of time or the rates of attrition of workers in short duration.