

WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN TURKEY

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2000 yılında yapılan Genel Nüfus Sayım Sonuçlarına göre, kadınların toplam nüfusa oranı % 50,1'dir. Türkiye'de nüfusun yarısının kadın olmasına rağmen, ekonomik kalkınmaya olan katkıları çok azdır. Stereotip değer yargılarına göre, Türkiye'de kadınlar, evde çocuklarla ilgilenip, ev işleri yaparlar. Bu inanış, resmi istatistiklere de yansımış bulunmaktadır. 2000 yılında, Türkiye'de 15 yaş ve üzerindeki kadınların yalnızca dörtte biri çalışmaktadır. Geçmiş yıllardaki çalışmalarda, işgücü piyasalarına kadınların tam katılımının sağlanmasının fırsat eşitliği ve etkinliğin tavsiye edilen bir amacı olduğu yaygın olarak varsayıldığı işaret edilmektedir (Tansel, 2001; Salido, 2002). Kadınların işgücü piyasasına tam katılımı, onların kişisel ve sosyal kalkınmaları için anahtar bir rol oynar ve ülkenin genel ekonomik etkinliğinin artmasını da sağlar. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmada, Türkiye'de kadınların işgücü piyasasına katılımını etkileyen, kadınların kişisel vasıfları, aile içindeki pozisyonları, içinde buldukları hukuksal ve ekonomik çevre gibi faktörler incelenecektir. Bu analizin ışığında, Türkiye'de kadınların işgücü piyasasına katılımını artırmak için politika uygulamaları belirlenecektir.

ABSTRACT

According to the Turkish Demographic Survey, women represented 50.1 percent of the population in 2000. Although half of the population in Turkey consists of women, their contribution to the economic development of the country is relatively small. According to stereotyped beliefs, the Turkish woman stays at home to take care of children and household duties. This picture is supported by official statistics, which reveal that only about a quarter of the Turkish female civilian population, fifteen years and over, worked in 2000. Previous studies indicate that full incorporation of women into the labour market is widely assumed as an advisable goal of equality of opportunities and efficiency (Tansel, 2001; Salido, 2002). Women's full integration into the labour market plays a key role for their personal and social development and also serves to increase the general economic efficiency of the country. Therefore, this paper will examine factors such as: women's personal characteristics and their status in the family, legal and economic environment, which influence women's decision to enter the labour force in Turkey. In light of this analysis policy implications to increase women's labour force participation in Turkey will be specified.

INTRODUCTION

Before analysing recent trends in the women's labour force participation rate, we need to define what we mean by female labour force participation rate. According to national statistics, female labour force participation rate is defined as proportion of female population aged 15 years and over, working or looking for work. The number of females working includes those who are in paid employment and those who are in unpaid employment. In this study, we use the State Institute of Statistics Household Labour Force Survey results, which include population 15 years, and over and women working on the family farm or business as unpaid family workers.

Official statistics reveal that only about a quarter of the Turkish female civilian population fifteen years and over worked in 2000. Also according to the Turkish Demographic Survey, women represented 50.1 percent of the population in 2000. Although half of the populations in Turkey are women their contribution to the economic development of

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the country is very little. In developed countries, female labour force participation rates have been increasing significantly in recent years. However, in Turkey and in many developing countries female labour force participation rates show a declining trend. In Turkey, it decreased from 72 percent in 1955 to nearly 26 percent in 2000. Changes in the participation rate occur for a number of reasons. Structural factors, demographic trends and also cyclical factors related to the economic environment have a major impact on labour force participation. It is very important to separate these different effects. As is known, the policy implications to enhancing women's participation in economic life can be quite different if there are changes in the participation rate related to structural and economic environment or demographic and cultural and social factors. Therefore, in this paper, we focus on movements in the female participation rate over the last decade and examine the factors, which influence women's decision to enter the labour force. In light of this analysis, we will specify policy implications to increase women's labour force participation rate in Turkey.

Table 1. Labour force participation trends for women and men

	1955		1985		1995		2000	
	F	M %	F	M %	F	M %	F	M %
Total	72.0	95.4	43.6	78.3	30.6	77.8	25.5	73.1
Urban	6.3	78.7	13.7	69.9	16.7	74.2	17.2	70.7
Rural	92.3	93.0	47.4	75.1	49.2	82.6	38.6	77.0

Source: World Bank, 1993, p.28, for 1955 and 1985. These figures are based on the civilian population 12 years and over.

SIS, Household Labour Force Survey Results, 2000, for 1995 and 2000. These figures are based on the civilian population 15 years and over.

ANALYSING TRENDS IN WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

There has been a decline in the female labour force participation rate (LFPR) in Turkey since the mid 1950s. While the LFPR for female was 72 percent in 1955 it declined to about 26 percent recently (see Table

1), which is very low when compared to the OECD average of 69.0 percent (OECD, 2002). The male LFPR has also decreased during this period, although by much less than for females.

This declining trend in the participation rate is not surprising for Turkey given the on-going structural changes in the economy. During the last 30 years, Turkey has been experiencing a huge transformation from an agriculture economy to an industrial one. This has been accomplished with fast urbanization and has affected the composition of the labour force. In addition, there have been social changes, such as increasing educational attainments and opportunities, and sectoral changes that moving from an agricultural sector to a service or industrial sector entails. In Turkey, migration from rural to urban negatively affected the female participation rate more than males. While women have traditionally had a source of employment in agriculture as unpaid family workers, they cannot participate in urban labour force after the migration (Kocak, 1999:69).

Another reason for declining trends in the female force participation rates could be the early retirement plan introduced in early 1980's. According to these retirement arrangements women at age 50 or after 20 years of service and men after 25 years of service or at age 55 had the right to retire. This institutional arrangement contributed to the lower participation rates of the middle to older age groups. This retirement plan has since been changed, as longer years of service and higher age limits were introduced in 2001. This new law is expected to increase participation rates around 50 years of age (Tansel, 2001:4).

Tansel (2001) shows in her study that younger populations have been staying in school longer recently. The 1997 law, which extended the duration of compulsory primary education from five to eight years, and the current increase in enrolment rates at all levels of schooling have helped to delay recent participation rates of the young population.

As is seen in Table 1, there is a great disparity between the participation rate of rural and urban area. In 2000, the rural female participation rate was nearly 39 percent compared with 17.2 percent in urban areas. The higher participation rates for rural women can be explained by differences in the labour market conditions of rural areas where agriculture plays an important role and women are traditionally

employed in these agricultural works. Other factors such as unemployment rates, educational attainments and skill levels, the “discouraged worker” effects, and prevailing cultural norms that exclude women from associating with non-kin males may also play a role in the low participation rates of women in urban areas. In addition, the failure of official labour statistics to cover workers in the informal sectors needs to be taken into account when analysing the patterns of the female labour force participation rate in urban areas where uneducated and unskilled women work in informal sectors.

Table 2 The Distribution of Male and Female Labour Force by Economic Status and Urban-Rural in 2000

Economic Status	Rural Male (%)	Female (%)	Urban Male (%)	Female (%)
Unpaid workers	19.8	77.1	3.3	9.6
Employee	30.2	9.3	69.7	80.0
Self-Employed	47.4	13.5	17.3	8.7
Employer	2.7	0.2	9.8	1.8

Source: SIS, Household Labour Force Survey Results, (2000). These figures include civilian population 15 years and over.

Table 2 demonstrates the employment status of women, which shows us social and traditional beliefs in Turkey. There is a major difference in employment status between rural and urban females and rural males and females, however, in urban areas, males and females’ employment status was quite similar to each other. In rural areas the percentage of women working, as unpaid family workers, was 77 percent compared with 9.6 percent in urban area. The number of rural women working as employees was recorded at only 9.3 percent, compared to 80 percent for urban women. In urban areas the female and male workforce shows a more equal distribution of employment.

The urban and rural differentials in the gender distribution of employment status demonstrate that the social and economic structure of the Turkish Labour market is quite different between these areas. In rural areas, agriculture is the main activity for both male and females, but mainly women work in the farms as unpaid family workers. The changes of economic structure from agriculture to services and

industrial sectors create more work opportunities for men and women in urban areas than rural areas. Moreover the differences indicate that traditional and patriarchal beliefs and values are more prevalent in urban than in rural areas.

The relative employment status of men and women confirms that women are still accepted as homemakers and mothers rather than breadwinners. Only a minority of women are able to control their own economic lives. The majority of females appears to be the economic minority and is generally economically dependant men (Kocak, 1999:78).

Table 3 presents the distribution of the male and female labour force by sector of economic activity. During the period from 1990 to 2000 the agricultural labour force decreased from 82.27 percent to 59.1 percent for females and from 38.02 percent to 26.4 percent for males. However, industry and services increased for both genders during the same period. This outcome reflects the structural changes in the Turkish economy, as it moves from an agricultural economy to an industrial and service economy. However, analysis of data by sector of economy shows that women are generally unevenly distributed across sectors, they are concentrated in lower occupational categories and their work is closely related to their traditional household duties.

Table 3: Distribution of Male And Female Labour Force By Sector Of Economic Activity

Economic Sector	1990		2000	
	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %
Agriculture	82.27	38.02	59.1	26.4
Industry	6.67	16.33	13.8	28.3
Service	10.97	45.65	27.1	45.2

Source: Tansel, A., (2001), Economic Development and Female Labour Force Participation in Turkey, p. 31. These figures are based on the civilian population 15 years and over.

INFLUENCES ON THE PARTICIPATION RATES

Factors affecting the female participation rate represent an interaction of social, cultural and economic environment. Women’s personal characteristics such as age, educational level etc. and their status in the family, (which considers marital status, number of children

and children's age group) also affect female participation rates. However, in this section, the factors affecting of labour force participation of women, such as years of schooling, age and marital status will be explained with the available data. In addition, the factors that influence a woman's decision not to enter the labour force in rural and urban areas will also be examined by using most recent data.

The relationship between marital status and female participation reveals that single women and divorced women have much higher participation rates than married and widowed women (see Table 4). This outcome suggests that the main factor contributing to women's participation in the labour market is financial need. It is well known that financial motivation is the most important factor in women's participation for divorced women, because they are the head of the household and need to support their family and children. However, being married and also having children negatively affects the LFPR of women due to their childcare and housekeeping chores, which are thought to be married women's primary job. Single women's LFPR is likely to be higher than married women's LFPR because they do not have family obligations, but it is likely to be lower than the LFPR of divorced women because financial need is not as important to them (Kocak, 1999; World Bank, 1993). The data shows that widowed women have the lowest participation rate. This may be due to the fact that a high proportion of widows are elderly and have reduced participation rates (Tansel, 2001).

On the other hand, the male participation rate demonstrates different profiles; married men have the highest LFPR (80.6 percent), divorced men have the second highest (71.9 percent), and widowed men have the lowest (28.4 percent) after single men (58.5 percent). All these figures support the idea that men are breadwinners and women are the secondary (supplementary) labour force in Turkey.

Male and female participation rates also reflect different participation rates between age groups. The age profiles of males show the bell-shaped pattern as is usually observed in most of the OECD countries (World Bank, 1993). The participation rates increase gradually through the twenties, as they complete their education, and reach a peak at the 35-39 age categories. After that, at the age of fifty, participation rates decrease sharply. On the other hand, the female profiles show a

different pattern: the LFPR of urban female rises steadily and reaches a small peak at the age of 20-24 and then begins to decrease from this age category. This indicates that the majority of women does not or cannot re-enter the labour market after an interruption in employment (Ozar and Gunluk-Senesen, 1998).

Table 4: Labour Force Participation Rates By Gender And Marital Status (%)

Marital Status	1988		1992		2000	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Single	47.8	91.8	44.4	69.1	33.7	58.5
Married	32.0	86.4	30.8	85.4	24.2	80.6
Divorced	41.5	81.1	45.5	70.2	40.2	71.9
Widow	16.0	30.1	14.0	32.2	10.8	28.4

Source: Tansel, A., (2001), Economic Development and Female Labour Force Participation in Turkey, p. 30. These figures are based on the civilian population 15 years and over.

Table 5: Labour Force Participation Rates By Gender And Age Groups %

Age Group	1988		1992		2000	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
15-19	40.5	64.2	34.9	56.3	23.4	45.3
20-24	40.8	87.5	40.5	86.5	31.1	72.0
25-29	35.9	97.9	33.8	97.1	30.7	90.9
30-34	36.4	98.5	34.5	98.6	28.4	94.4
35-39	36.5	98.5	36.4	97.6	28.9	95.3
40-44	34.5	95.8	35.4	95.2	27.5	93.1
45-49	34.3	89.0	33.9	88.8	24.5	82.7
50-54	34.1	82.4	31.8	78.4	24.5	68.8
55-59	27.3	71.0	29.6	67.5	22.7	57.8
60-64	19.8	58.1	20.1	56.4	16.9	47.4
65 +	10.1	33.3	9.7	31.0	10.3	32.0

Source: Tansel, A., (2001), Economic Development and Female Labour Force Participation in Turkey, p. 29. These figures are based on the civilian population 15 years and over.

The early studies of the World Bank (1993) shows that there are great differences in female participation rates by age groups between

rural and urban areas. The rural women workers age profiles between 1988 to 1992 shows the M, or twin peak pattern, observed in most OECD countries during the 1960s and 1970s, but recently these M shape profiles have been replaced by bell shape patterns like those of males. The participation rate increases between the teenage years and the early twenties, as women leave school and join the labour market, but it decreases during the ages of 24-34 because of marriage and childcare duties. It then increases between the ages of 35 and 50, when children are grown and finally after age 50 it falls once more. These trends are consistent with the observation that was mentioned earlier for rural females, whose LFPRs are higher, and who's marriage and childcare does not disturb them as much as they affect their urban counterparts (Kocak, 1999: 73).

Gender differences and their effects on the labour force participation rate for rural and urban areas are shown in Table 6 and 7. As expected, education is a very important determinant of female labour force participation. The relationship between educational attainment and the participation rate is more determinant for women than men. It has been shown by recent studies that schooling is a consistent and the most effective determinant of female participation (Kasnakoglu and Dayioglu, 1996; Tunali, 1997; Tansel, 1994; 1996; Dayioglu, 2000). The effects of education on the participation rate are generally seen in two forms. "Firstly, as wages and work opportunities in labour market are determined by schooling educated women find it more attractive to work in labour market rather than remain in nonmarket, such as household activities. Secondly, because of the effectiveness of schooling female labour supply, independent of influences through wages, by breaking down the noneconomic constraints related to the woman's (as well as her family's and society's) attitudes toward market work as opposed to housework" (World Bank, 1993: 40).

Moreover, Colak and Kilic (2001) explored female labour force participation in Sanliurfa, which is a newly developing province in Turkey, and found that education is the most important factor affecting women's integration into the economy.

As seen in Tables 6 and 7 the relationship between the participation rate and educational level is more apparent among urban women than rural women. The participation rate of urban women, with

less than primary schooling, is around 8 percent, but it increases dramatically with increased education; nearly 11 percent with primary education, 27 percent with high school and 69 percent with university education. This indicates that women in urban areas are more likely to join and take advantage of work opportunities with increasing education than their rural counterparts.

In rural areas, education has little effect on labour force participation except in university education. This is because rural women are generally employed in agriculture, or work as unpaid family workers in jobs where educational attainments are not required. On the other hand, in urban areas, industrial and service sectors are prevalent and require relatively more education than agriculture. When females migrate from rural areas to urban areas with little or no-education and their experience is only in agricultural work, they cannot enter the labour force easily.

Table 6: Labour Force Participation by Educational Status and Gender in Urban Areas

	1988 (%)		1992 (%)		2000 (%)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Illiterate	8.9	62.7	7.2	52.2	5.3	43.5
Lit.without any diploma	10.0	62.6	10.7	49.5	8.0	45.3
Primary school	12.9	77.1	11.4	73.0	10.9	78.4
Secondary School	15.1	56.8	13.0	53.6	16.9	68.4
Vocational Junior high school	16.0	51.0	10.2	51.0	11.0	52.6
High School	44.3	74.2	37.9	74.6	27.5	65.0
Vocational High school	50.3	82.3	49.0	78.6	40.1	77.2
Universities & other higher education	81.6	87.6	83.3	89.1	69.2	81.9

Source: SIS, 1994, Temel Kadin Gostergeleri, for 1988 and 1992, p.57. SIS, Household Labour Force Survey Results, 2000, for 2000.

Table 7: Labour Force Participation Rate by Educational Status and Gender in Rural Areas

	1988 (%)		1992 (%)		2000 (%)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Illiterate	49.3	73.9	44.9	64.5	36.1	61.1
Lit.without any diploma	49.1	75.7	46.2	59.3	39.2	61.9
Primary school	55.4	84.9	55.4	83.4	40.1	83.5
Secondary school	28.8	65.0	27.4	53.9	29.2	62.9
Vocational Junior high school	20.0	44.7	19.6	62.7	18.3	43.1
High School	51.9	80.0	46.0	83.3	31.3	74.7
Vocational High school	65.9	84.4	79.7	83.3	54.9	84.4
Universities & other higher education	89.4	96.5	88.1	98.0	75.0	89.9

Source: SIS, 1994, Temel Kadin Gostergeleri, for 1988 and 1992, p.57. SIS, Household Labour Force Survey Results, 2000, for 2000.

As mentioned above, the female participation rate is very low in our country. Although we have explained some of personal characteristics such as age, education level etc. that influence women's decisions to enter the labour force, there are also some factors that effect women's decision not to enter the labour force. Tables 8 and 9 indicate that the reasons accounting for non-participation of women in both the rural and urban labour force.

According to the data, the most important reason not to enter the labour force for both rural and urban women (64.6 % and 71.2 % respectively) is being a housewife. Other reasons such as being a student, being retired or disabled and ill etc. have little affect on not entering the labour force. However, for men, being retired or a student are the most important factors pertaining to why men do not join the labour force in both rural and urban areas (see Table 8 and 9). This is consistent with the outcome of married women's participation rates as well. According to the data, the highest participation rates are observed for married males and second lowest (after widowed females) participation rates are observed for married females. This shows that women are still accepted as homemakers and mothers rather than breadwinners.

Ozar and Gunluk-Senesen (1998) examined the factors influencing women's decisions not to enter the labour force in urban Turkey and

found that the role of women as "wives and mothers" in the household is the most important determinant of non-participation of women. They state that "the gradual fall in fertility rates since the 1950s does not seem to have a significant impact on women's labour force participation. The widely accepted norm is that looking after children is the responsibility of women and lack of child-care facilities are considered to have a significant impact on this outcome" (Ozar and Gunluk-Senesen, 1998; 322).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS TO INCREASE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

In this section, in the light of this analysis, policy implications to increase women's labour force participation in Turkey will be specified. As mentioned above, female labour force participation in Turkey is very low. The study shows that the most important factors affecting the female labour force are the educational level, the burden of household responsibilities, and childcare activities. For this reason, we believe that raising women's educational attainments and reducing and equalizing the burden of household responsibilities and childcare activities could have pervasive effects greater than any other policies such as affirmative action or equal employment opportunity strategies, to increase women's labour force participation.

The impact of education is quite substantial in improving women's position in both market and non-market areas. Increased and improved education would raise women's participation rates and increase continuity in their labour force attachment. In addition, providing education and training also enables women to catch up and adapt to changing economic conditions and new technology.

Moreover, the policies to harmonize employment and family responsibilities for women and men and to promote egalitarian sharing of domestic and community responsibilities are very important in increasing women's participation as well. Although changing social conventions about the roles of men and women is not very easy, the World Bank (1993) report on Turkey proposes that "policy responses in the form of "moral suasion" are possible. For example, through promotional and publicity campaigns (e.g. TV programmes, documentaries and media advertising by government) showing men

helping in household chores, women working in “male-dominated” occupations and publicizing the dilemmas that working women face in juggling their time” (World Bank, 1993, p.46). These types of policies can have a great impact on younger generations, as well as on society as a whole. In addition, the government needs to apply some policy measures to encourage the sharing of domestic chore responsibilities between men and women. For example, as Riach (1975) recommends in his Australian study, introducing compulsory domestic science and child care courses into the curriculum of all schools for both genders at the appropriate age levels assist and encourage males to learn and accept their responsibility of domestic duties. Further, Riach (1975) advises that “to aid in the development of symmetrical work roles between the sexes, the taxation and social security system should be restructured so that the same benefits, credits, deductions, etc., are available to any individual, regardless of sex, who opts for a full-time ‘non-market’ function” (Riach, 1975, p.79). For instance, in Sweden, such programs as social insurance payments to either fathers or mothers who draw out from the labour force after childbirth and the right of 15 days absentee leave per year to look after sick children for all employees whether male or female, in Swedish civil service, had enormous impact on growing the female labour force in the sixties (Madden, 1973). We assume that the Turkish government should benefit from this Swedish experience to help the integration of women into labour market.

In Turkey, there have been legislative initiatives to improve the position of women recently. For instance, maternal leave has been extended up to 16 weeks and dismissal of a female worker on the basis of pregnancy and other discriminatory practices against women, which discourage them not to participate the labour market, has been introduced. These recent developments may help to increase women’s integration into the economy in the future.

In addition, the new Labour Law part-time work regulation, which is considered to conciliate between family and work life, has been introduced currently. This availability of flexibility and reduction of labour time for workers could be seen as an instrument to encourage women to enter the labour market. However, it is important to note that, although part-time work provides an option for women who do not want to work full-time due to family responsibilities, it also limits

their available labour market opportunities and hampers them in terms of lower occupational status and low paying jobs (Kocak, 1999).

Finally, we believe the low participation rates for females in Turkey arise from the constrained labour market choices and institutional barriers to their education, employment and training. Also cultural and traditional beliefs about women’s roles in the family and in society as a whole inhibit their full integration into the labour market. Therefore, all of these findings propose that intervention to increase women’s labour participation is inevitable in Turkey. In addition, the most effective instrument for integrating women into economy is education, which includes all forms of schooling; formal and informal, adult education, vocational education and on-the-job training.

Table 8: Percentage Distribution of Male and Female not in Labour Force by Reasons in Urban Areas

	1992	2002
FEMALE		
Total	100.0	100.0
Available for work but not seeking a job	1.4	0.1
Discouraged	0.7	0.6
Seasonal worker	0.3	0.7
Housewife	76.6	71.2
Student	6.6	8.6
Retired	2.4	4.2
Having property income	1.5	1.7
Disabled, old or ill	7.8	5.4
Family or personal reasons	3.4	5.5
Using the channel for looking for work more than six months	-	1.2
Other	-	-
MALE		
Total	100.0	100.0
Available for work but not seeking a job	0.9	0.4
Discouraged	1.5	1.3
Seasonal worker	0.5	1.2
Student	38.5	33.2
Retired	38.3	37.8
Having property income	2.4	0.7
Disabled, old or ill	13.0	8.4
Family or personal reasons	4.5	9.4
Using the channel for looking for work more than six months	-	6.8
Other	0.08	0.1

Source: SIS, 2004, Türkiye’de Kadın Bilgi Ağı, State Institute of Statistics Website (www.die.gov.tr/tkba/t160.xls).

Table 9: Percentage Distribution of Male and Female not in Labour Force by Reasons in Rural Areas

	1992	2002
FEMALE		
Total	100.0	100.0
Available for work but not seeking a job	0.3	0.1
Discouraged	0.8	1.2
Seasonal worker	2.0	6.3
Housewife	69.1	64.6
Student	3.5	4.8
Retired	0.3	0.8
Having property income	1.9	1.5
Disabled, old or ill	19.3	15.9
Family or personal reasons	2.3	3.6
Using the channel for looking for work more than six months	-	0.7
Other	-	-
MALE		
Total	100.0	100.0
Available for work but not seeking a job	1.9	1.1
Discouraged	2.2	3.0
Seasonal worker	1.9	12.6
Student	31.2	21.9
Retired	18.4	20.8
Having property income	7.2	2.9
Disabled, old or ill	32.6	24.5
Family or personal reasons	4.8	7.0
Using the channel for looking for work more than six months	-	5.8
Other	0.07	0.04

Source: SIS, 2004, *Turkiye`de Kadin Bilgi Agi*, State Institute of Statistics Website (www.die.gov.tr/tkba/t160.xls).

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