

GENDER BASED DISCRIMINATION AT WORK IN TURKEY: A CROSS-SECTORAL OVERVIEW

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Türkiye’de Çalışma Yaşamında Cinsiyete Dayalı Ayrımcılık: Sektörler Arası Bir Karşılaştırma

Özet

Bu makalede Türkiye’de kadınların istihdam durumları ve çalışma yaşamının değişik alanlarında karşılaştıkları cinsiyete dayalı ayrımcılık uygulamaları, esas olarak 1994-1998 yılları arasında yürütülen “Kadın İstihdamını Geliştirme Projesi” (KİG) kapsamında gerçekleştirilen araştırmaların bulguları temelinde tartışılmaktadır. KİG projesi araştırmaları kadınların sanayide ve hizmetler sektöründeki güncel istihdam durumlarının yanı sıra kadınların işgücüne katılmak için üstesinden gelmeleri gereken kültürel engellere ilişkin zengin bilgi sunmaktadır. Bu çalışmada çalışma yaşamına girişte ve işyerlerinde karşılaşılan ayrımcılık biçimleri ele alınmakta ve günümüz Türkiye’sinde kadınların işgücü piyasasındaki konumlarının mevcut toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri, geleneksel ataerkil değerler ve ayrımcılık tarafından nasıl belirlendiği incelenmektedir. Kadınların geleneksel olmayan istihdam alanlarında artan sayıları ve uluslararası sözleşmelere de bağlı olarak çalışma yaşamında kadınların eşitliğini öngören yasal düzenlemelerin varlığı, kadınların toplumdaki rolüne ilişkin zihniyet yapılarını ve geleneksel yaklaşımları köklü biçimde sarsmak ve değiştirmek bakımından yeterli olmamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadın istihdamı, iş yaşamında ayrımcılık, toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri, ataerkil değerler, zihniyet yapıları.

Abstract

The article presents data on the employment situation of women and on gender-based discrimination in different sectors in Turkey based mainly on research carried out within the framework of the Women’s Employment Promotion Project (WEP) between 1994-1998. WEP provided abundant information on the current situation of women’s employment in industry and services as well as the cultural obstacles and disincentives women must overcome to join the workforce. This study evaluates the data on discrimination in entering working life and in the workplaces and argues that patriarchal cultural values, pre-existing gender roles and subsequent social discrimination determine women’s position in the labor market in contemporary Turkey. The fact that the percentage of women has increased to a certain degree in so called non-traditional occupations and that there is a framework of necessary legal protection for women in work life as a result of the international conventions, has not been enough to challenge and change radically the mentalities and traditional approaches concerning women’s role in society.

Keywords: Female employment, discrimination at work, gender roles, patriarchal values, mentalities.

Gender Based Discrimination at Work in Turkey: A Cross-Sectoral Overview

Introduction

1.1. Focus of Studies on Women's Employment

The discrimination women have to face in the labor market has long been a subject of study for economists and social scientists. With the increase in labor force participation of women in developed countries, studies began to deal with the causes of different forms of discrimination such as wage differences, occupational segregation and restricted career opportunities of women. Feminist scholars highlighted the relationship between women's gender-based responsibilities (such as housework and childcare) and their disadvantaged position in the labor market.

In many developing countries both the participation of women in the labor market and the percentage of women with paid work is lower than they are in the developed countries and in general related statistical data on gender basis is lacking. Since discrimination begins with the low participation of women in labor force, most of the time the focus of research in these countries has been on the rates of participation in the labor force, the sectoral distribution of the labor force, employment status and unemployment. Turkey as a developing country shows similar characteristics.

Research on women's labor and employment in Turkey began in the midst of seventies and it was influenced from the second wave of feminist movement. Boserup's (1970) marginalization thesis was used to explain the low level of women's labor force participation and the stabilization of women's employment (in a limited degree) in non-agricultural activities (ÖZBAY, 1998).

In 1980s, within the context of globalization and structural adjustment policies, flexibility has taken mainly the form of informalization and female labor force has been utilized extensively in developing countries producing and

exporting for the world markets. This in turn has resulted in an increase in women's participation in labor force while the participation of men has declined. Consequently, a rise in male unemployment and a decrease in female unemployment could be observed (STANDING, 1989, 1999; UN, 1999). At this point, the situation in most of the Middle Eastern countries and Turkey differs from that in most of the developing countries as the female participation rates in labor force remain low. Only in the last few decades women's share of employment has been increasing in this group of countries (especially Arab countries) as well from 22 percent in 1970 to 27 percent in 1995 (UN, 1999:8). This rate which is higher in Turkey with 31 percent has not shown any increase in the last decade.

The studies dealing with the dimensions of change in the composition of labor force in manufacturing industry and the influence of structural adjustment policies in Turkey (ÇAGATAY/BERİK, 1991, 1994; ÖZAR, 1994; ECEVİT, 1998a) have shown no notable alteration in the position of the female labor force. While employment in agriculture has declined slowly in time, an outstanding increase in women's employment outside agriculture could not be observed in the period of export oriented growth model. This was basically the outcome of the fact that the expected increase in industrial investments has not taken place due to various economic and financial factors (ŞENSES, 1996). One of the indicators of this is that Turkey has not been a country which attracted foreign direct investments compared with other countries. Not being one of the favourite destinations for foreign capital flows Turkey has increased its foreign capital stocks to 16,6 billion dollars in twenty years, an amount which China attracted in only one year (2002) (www.treasury.gov.tr). Most of the foreign direct investments in developing countries has been in labor-intensive industries such as textiles, clothing, electronics etc. whose labor force is predominantly female (UN, 1999: 5). Due to the insignificance of foreign direct investments in Turkey the demand for female labor remained very limited with some exceptions in garment industry.

In the context of globalization female employment in the service sector especially in banking and insurance services which employ relatively high proportions of women in qualified positions has increased all over the world (UN, 1999: 11). The situation also found its reflections in Turkey. Rapidly expanding service sector especially in financial services and in information processing brought employment opportunities for a large number of qualified women in urban areas. Banking sector can be given as an example. The proportion of women employed increased from 33 percent in 1984 to 39 percent in 1994 and reached 50 percent in 2002 in private banks. In the same

period this rate has remained relatively stable with 32-33 percent in the public banks (www.tbb.org.tr).

In countries where the agricultural sector employs an important part of the labor force, the female labor force increases very slowly outside the agricultural sector (HORTON, 1999) and the labor force participation of women is influenced by many intertwining demographical and social factors including those related to women's responsibilities in the family (TZANNATOS, 1999). Both of these explanations are applicable to the situation in Turkey. Women who are productively engaged in rural areas find themselves outside the production process in the urban areas where their family has migrated for political or economical reasons. This is caused **not only** by the insufficiency of paid work opportunities which would encourage women to work in urban areas, **but also** and **mainly** by the existing patriarchal mentalities which are unfavorable to women's work..

This article argues that in contemporary Turkey, cultural values, pre-existing gender roles and subsequent social discrimination still determine women's position in the labor market whether they are qualified or unqualified. Indispensability of domestic labor and prevalent cultural norms defining women's primary role as mother and housewife explain their disadvantaged and subordinated position in the labor market. A large number of women cannot even leave the domestic sphere and those who are educated and work as skilled personnel still face various forms of discrimination at work. The discriminations in terms of entering work and for various issues at work will be overviewed depending on the results of different investigations done under the Women's Employment Promotion Project (WEP) in Turkey during 1994-1998 which is the first over all systematic approach to the employment issues of women in Turkey. This also means that we shall be limited with the areas investigated in the WEP project and the discriminatory practices at work will be illuminated by taking mainly cases from the formally organized sector in industry or services.

1.2. WEP: A Comprehensive Project on Women's Employment

To understand the causes of low female participation in the labor market was one of the aims of the Women's Employment Promotion (WEP) Project and the studies conducted within the project highlighted the issue of powerful

gender roles preventing women from undertaking income earning activities.¹ The general aim of WEP can be summarized as understanding the current situation of women's employment and developing related policy proposals in order to increase the total number of employed women and to supply women with better career opportunities and jobs.

Presence of a research advisory committee including people from private and public sectors and NGOs who could contribute to the project with their academic, administrative and technical expertise on employment, labor and related issues gave a chance to the project team of WEP and the implementing government agency DGSPW to formulate the research priorities and topics by taking into consideration the needs and tendencies of a wider group of stakeholders as well as creating an awareness and legitimization of the project in wider circles.

WEP was planned as an action oriented research project and therefore the individual researchers were expected to design their research strategies not only for the satisfaction of academic curiosity and interest, but also with the perspective of formulating policy proposals to empower women in working life. While studying both the demand and supply aspects of women's labor, the researchers were also expected to approach the employment situation of women sociologically rather than in pure economic terms.

A discussion on methodology was considered an important part of the research process in WEP and in order to grasp the problem with a feminist perspective the research teams (academicians from universities and/or research experts from private and public sector) were encouraged to use qualitative research techniques such as in-depth interviews and focus groups besides quantitative methods (ATAUZ et al., 1998).

The research topics in WEP were categorized under three main headings systematically related with one another to give a general picture of women's employment in Turkey from different aspects. These headings were:

¹The WEP was one of the eight components of the Training and Employment Project, which was an umbrella project financed through a loan agreement between Turkey and the World Bank in 1993. A series of research activities were accomplished in WEP which were planned, monitored and evaluated by a technical assistance team together with the Directorate General for Women's Status and Problems (DGSPW), the national machinery for women which acted as the implementing government agency. The authors of this article worked as local research consultants of WEP in the technical assistance team for four years.

1) less known features of women's employment (such as unemployment, prospective demands for female labor),

2) relationship between female education and vocational training with employment,

3) sector and employer studies (such as discrimination in different branches of work).

In each of these categories several research projects were conducted summing up to a total of 16 investigations.

II. Women's Current Employment Situation in the Light of Developments in the Turkish Economy

To give a short summary of the economic situation in Turkey can help us to have a clearer understanding of the labor market position of women. Up until 1980, Turkey has followed a protectionist import substitution growth model based on internal accumulation and appropriate distribution relations. While domestic demand for commodities and services were crucial in this system, wages and income of small producers were kept high enough to create the sufficient demand. Under strong labor unions there was a steady rise in real wages and the prices of agricultural products were supported by state subventions. Women's employment rates were low in this period mainly depending on the fact that the main income earners, namely the husbands' wages were considered sufficient for the living of the family. The tremendous growth of foreign currency deficit gave the first signal for the end of this development strategy.

In January 1980 a new phase began with the adaptation of structural adjustment policies imposed from the World Bank and IMF to all developing countries of the world. According to these policies Turkey had to adapt an export-led growth model, in which all state incentives were to be directed to the promotion of exports and other foreign currency bringing undertakings. To be competitive in the world markets exportable commodities and services had to be produced with low costs. This meant a new pattern of distributive relations in which the wages and the prices in all sectors (especially in the agricultural sector) producing the inputs of the manufacturing industry were kept under control. The economic program also included downsizing the state, reducing the public expenditures and privatizing the main economic enterprises of the state. The military putsch of September 1980 created the suitable conditions for the implementation of this program by ruling out all types of social opposition and imposing restrictions on the labor union activities.

Although the implementation of this growth model led to an increase in exports, Turkey had become one of the unstable countries of the developing

world with a huge burden of external debts. Frequently faced with economic crises, the increased impoverishment of people has manifested itself in high unemployment rates and a very uneven income distribution.² Increasing poverty led the households to new income generating strategies such as men looking for additional jobs; women, children and the retired entering the labor market and a general reduction of household expenditures. Women with children usually preferred to do home-based work or do more work at home for their families to replace the commodities and services bought from the market. Those who looked for paid work were usually employed in domestic services or in the small workshops in the informal sector since the number of jobs in the formal sector were insufficient.

Within the framework of these economic developments, the 1999 statistics (which are more reliable compared with the statistics collected after the economic crisis in 2000-2001) reflect that the labor force participation of women in Turkey is 29.7 percent, with only 35 percent of all working women being occupied in income earning activities. Participation in the labor force varies in urban and rural areas, the proportion being lower in the urban areas. In rural areas the participation in the labor force is as high as 47.6 percent and drops to 15.8 percent in urban areas. The difference in the participation rates between rural and urban is primarily influenced by the migration from the rural to the urban areas. Most of the women employed in agricultural activities in rural areas are out of the labor force in cities. Also the unemployment rates reach their highest levels in urban areas especially for women with 16,4 percent (men 10,6 percent).

In 1999, the total labor force is 23,779,000, with 30.9 percent women (7,353,000). While women comprise 40.4 percent of the total labor force in rural areas, this proportion drops to 20 percent in urban areas. The total urban female labor force sums up to 2,215,000.

2 In 1999 Turkey had with 188.3 billion USD the 22nd biggest GNDP among the countries of the world, however with an 2900 USD per capita income it took the 43rd row, being placed among the lower-middle income countries. External debt stocks amounted to 102 billion USD, being the eighth highest indebted country in the world. Regarding income distribution in 2000 the highest income quintile (the richest 20%) of the society received 54.9 percent of total income, while the lowest income quintile (poorest 20%) received only 4.9 percent. Share of the lower and middle income groups of the society (the remaining 60 %) was 40.3 percent. With this uneven income distribution Turkey has the 19th position among 92 countries of the world (SÖNMEZ, 2001: 109-119).

The employment in various sectors shows that for men, the service sector is the most important source of employment, followed by agriculture and then industry. For women, agriculture still keeps its dominant position although its importance in employment has declined through the years. About 2/3 of employed women are unpaid family workers in small family businesses in agriculture or services.

Table 1: Employment by Different Sectors and Status in Employment (%)

Sector	Total	Female	Male
Agriculture	45,8	72,2	33,8
Industry	20,5	9,7	25,4
Services	33,7	18,1	40,8
Status			
Salaried worker	41,0	25,3	48,2
Self employed/employer	29,4	9,7	38,3
Unpaid family worker	29,6	65,1	13,5

Source: SIS, HLFSR, April 1999, pp.16-21

Bearing in mind that there are significant differences among women not only between rural and urban areas but also among geographical regions, social class and strata, an overview of the occupational distribution of urban women in Turkey can also point out to some particularities. While unpaid family work in agricultural activities and very low educational levels are determining women's labor in rural areas, most of the female labor force in urban areas is educated beyond primary school (59.6 percent) with 3/4 (74.5 percent) being salaried employees. When the distribution of women according to occupational groups is considered, it will be observed that there is a concentration of female workers in middle rank qualified posts such as scientific, technical, professional workers and clerical workers (42.2 percent). This is the point where the difference of Turkey is most striking from developing countries at similar levels and even from some of the developed countries. 38.2 percent of scientific, technical, professional and related workers as well as 38.1 percent of clerical and related workers are women. Women are largely represented in both groups whereas their share among production workers is relatively limited with 10.3 percent. On the other hand women's proportion among entrepreneurs, directors

and high level managers is 10.5 percent, a rate as low as in most of the other countries of the world (SIS, 1999: 105).

In 1995, the proportions in some of the specialized professions reveal that 28 percent of the lawyers, 39 percent of the architects, 13.5 percent of the engineers, 39 percent of the dentists and 33 percent of the academicians are women (KAĞITÇIBAŞI, 1999: 261). These statistics reflect that 'horizontal segregation' which refers to the distribution of men and women across occupations is relatively low in Turkey although it is highest in the Middle East and North Africa according to UN Report (1999: 17). This situation suggests that social, historical and cultural factors are important in determining the level of occupational segregation by sex. An explanation of this distinctiveness in Turkey could be sought in the efforts of the families especially in middle or higher income levels to educate their daughters for professional occupations in line with Atatürk's reforms since the establishment of the Republic. Within the framework of 'westernization' efforts and the ideology of the Republic, women have come forward in the public sphere by taking advantage of laws related to civil rights and education. The concrete results of this ideology has been in the specialization of women in scientific, technical and professional occupations. Predominantly urban women and women from middle and upper socioeconomic classes have benefited from the educational opportunities and specifically from higher education.³

The increasing proportion of female university students after 1980s in branches which are traditionally male-dominated could also be interpreted as a reflection of the continuation of this tendency. In 1999-2000, the proportion of female students was 47 percent in mathematical and natural sciences, 43

³ The reforms which carried women to the public sphere and the inclination of women towards specialized professions during the establishment of the Republic have been considered mostly as part of the women's liberation movement. Yet different evaluations have been made at the end of the 70's and during the 90's. In these evaluations the fact that the transformation was class based and that the Atatürk's reforms have been inadequate in modifying the status of women radically and annulling the gender roles in the division of labor within the family have been opened to discussion (ÖNCÜ, 1982, TEKELI, 1991, KANDIYOTI 1991, 1998, ARAT, Z., 1998, ARAT, Y., 1998, SIRMAN 1989, KADIOĞLU, 1998). In the final analysis as some of the researchers have also agreed, these improvements have been considered useful, particularly for the urban women to appear in the public sphere whilst taking advantage of the educational opportunities. In the long term, this has opened the path for legitimizing the existence of women in the working life and for eradicating the prejudices towards women who work in traditionally male professions.

percent in social sciences, 32 percent in agriculture and forestry, 23 percent in technical sciences. In branches such as architecture, chemical engineering, chemistry, mathematics and management the proportion of the female students is higher than the overall average of female students in the universities which is 40 percent (TAN, 2000: 53).

III. Discrimination in Entering the Work Life and at Work

The relatively low level of increase in the number of both employed and unemployed women when compared with the increase in the urban female population is related both with the low level of demand for women's work and the discouraging conditions of the limited number of jobs offered in terms of wages, benefits and services for child care. This low level of participation is also intensified on the supply side of women's labor with social and cultural obstacles caused by their gender roles and the understanding of these roles in the society. Along this line, one of the important social obstacles is that women's decision to work depends on men's permission and it is in general under their control. That women internalize their role as housewives and mothers and are less eager to work outside also creates another obstacle.

According to the findings of one of the research projects under WEP titled "Socio-economic and Cultural Dimensions of Urban Women's Participation in Working Life" which is conducted in four big cities of Turkey has reflected that while 44 percent of women who have never worked and not looking for a job currently have acted on their own free will, 47 percent were not allowed by their families and social circumstances (ÖZAR et al., 2000: 71).⁴ However, the major reason beyond women's decision not to work was again the desire to take care of their home and family. The impact of social pressure negatively affecting women's employment is intensified in settlements where migrants coming from the same rural areas live in close neighbourhoods.

Another study on unemployment under WEP was "Urban Women and Change as Potential Labor Force".⁵ The study has revealed that 58.7 percent of

4 In this project data was collected by a quota sample from 1125 women through face to face interviews in Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir and Adana. The quantitative information was enriched with qualitative data collected from five focus groups, two life histories and 25 in-depth interviews with women in Istanbul.

5 The data in this project was collected mainly through a survey and a few focus group discussions. The field survey was done in 10 municipalities in Istanbul and the sample was selected after a screening survey of 6643 women in the age groups 15-49.

unemployed women think that a woman needs her husband's permission to work and this rate increases to 71.9 percent among housewives (DEMIREL et al., 1999: 209-210). As the age and the educational level of unemployed women increase, the proportion of those thinking that the consent of husband is a necessity decreases. 87.3 percent of women without any formal educational degree and 19.4 percent of the university graduates think that such a permission is essential (DEMIREL et. al., 1999: 211).

Gender roles not only prevent a large number of women from entering the labor market, but also affect the permanence of their work. The reason for half of the women (55 percent) quitting work for a certain period of time is family and/or children, while 77 percent of such women have mentioned not being able to find a person or place to take care of their child. Most women receive the greatest encouragement from their mothers to continue with work and they are essentially helped along by their mothers or mother-in-laws when childcare is necessary (ÖZAR et al., 2000: 39). Women with children have problems in meeting the expectations of employers because of long working hours ⁶ especially in the private sector and this creates an obstacle in terms of being hired. Women's approach to wages is also shaped in relation to their considerations about childcare. Especially married women with young children expect to receive a salary which definitely exceeds their childcare expenses and other work related expenses. Otherwise, after calculating their losses and their gains, they prefer to stay at home and take care of their child. On the other hand, younger women who do not have the responsibility of children seem more willing to accept lower wages (ÖZAR et al., 2000: 94-95).

IV. Forms of Discrimination in the Workplace

IV.1. Legal Framework

In general it can be said that the Labor Law and related regulations in Turkey are treating men and women as equals. Besides "The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women" (CEDAW), which has been effective since October 14, 1985, foresees the prevention of all sorts of discrimination in the workplace, as in all other aspects of social life. Various

Among these 200 housewives, 108 unemployed, 439 marginal workers, 21 underemployed and 32 long time unemployed workers who were included in the final sample were interviewed through face to face questionnaires.

⁶ The legal work time in Turkey is 8 hours a day and 45 hours a week. However many workers especially in the private sector have to work much longer without any overpayment in order to keep their jobs.

ILO conventions and Council of Europe resolutions also entrust the governments to make the necessary arrangements to prevent discrimination. On the other hand, the existence of different forms of discrimination in work life can be taken as an indication of the fact that legal equality does not ensure equality in practice.

Discriminatory practices against women in the workplace become manifest during hiring, promotions, attitudes towards requests for permission, appointments, early retirement and dismissal from work. Sexual harassment of women in the workplaces is also a factor which discourages women to take a step toward work life outside her home.

IV.2 Hiring

While the discrimination of women in workplaces takes different forms in each sector, it fails to be prevented even in the work branches with a high concentration of women workers. A good example for this is the banking sector where a large number of women with high educational levels are employed at relatively favorable working conditions. One of the research projects in WEP which studied the female bank employees has indicated that during the hiring process, the most obvious discriminatory practices were: Hiring women in general as ordinary employees (categories of more routine work) and men as experts with higher chances of promotion to management positions; loading routine work upon women because they are considered to be more patient; placing good looking women at the front desks as a showcase and not employing women as inspectors (a position with more control power and prestige also demanding travel to other regions where branch offices are). Women were even asked in interviews during hiring not to have any children for some time (EYÜBOĞLU et al., 2000).⁷

Several women have related their experiences and views on these issues as follows:

“ We spoke to the manager. ‘Do you have any children?’ he asked. I said I have two. He asked ‘Do you want any more? If so, I won’t hire you.’ I replied ‘No, I’m not planning to have more.’ ‘Well then, we’ll

7 In this project titled “Gender Discrimination in the Banking Sector” data was collected in two stages: first, two public banks and one private bank with different characteristics were selected and a questionnaire was applied to 265 employees, both male and female. Among these, a group consisting of 28 male and 39 female employees including those in executive positions was selected and in-depth interviews were carried out.

get this thing arranged' he said." [39 years old, married, with high school education] (EYÜBOĞLU et. al., 2000: 57).

" The number of women starting out as clerks is so high. None of my male colleagues started as ordinary employees. Account expert, inspector... all good posts, and now they are all directors, deputy directors. (...) Men always have a better status." [32 years old, not married, with university education] (EYÜBOĞLU et. al., 2000: 64).

Other research projects under WEP reflected similar situations experienced by women applying for other, less traditional occupations. A woman looking for a job as a metallurgical engineer explained:

" I went with my husband to a glass-aluminum factory in Bursa for a job interview. They thought he was the engineer. I said, no, I'm the one. The men were horrified. 'Impossible', they said. I asked ' Did you make it clear in your ad that you wouldn't want a woman employee?' They answered that they hadn't even imagined that a woman would apply. They said 'Our workers, they swear, we can't forbid them because there is a woman around.' So, to have the freedom of swearing is more important!" [35 years old, married, long term unemployed] (ÖZAR et al., 2000: 126).

IV.3 Wages

It is difficult to make a comparative analysis of wage differentials and changes in wages in time because systematic and comprehensive data on gender basis does not exist. However, wage statistics related with different economic activities show that starting with Ottoman times, there was always a significant gap between the wages of men and women. Starting with 1951, although the governing statuses regulating the minimum wages have stated that there will be no difference between the men's and women's minimum wages, in practice these principles were not abided and the difference between wages went up to 100 percent (MAKAL, 2001: 144). In 1957, when the wages of female and male workers in different branches of economic activity are compared, in industries where the number of female workers is larger such as the food industry the wages are 55.1 percent of men's; in tobacco industry, 60.5 percent; in textile industry 75.4 percent; in clothing 72.4 percent (MAKAL, 2001: 146). Comparing the wages in the public and private sectors, one can see that the wage levels are significantly higher in the public sector, but the gender gap in wages continues (MAKAL, 2001: 148). The differences are mainly due to the fact that in the above mentioned branches of industry, women are employed as semi-skilled or unskilled workers (MAKAL, 2001: 151).

More recent statistics reflect that there are still important differences between the wages of men and women. According to the 1994 Wage and Employment Structure Statistics of the State Institute of Statistics, hourly wages of female workers insured by the Social Security Institution are to a great degree lower than those of male workers (61.4 percent). On the other hand, it is observed that the disparity is less between the wages of male and female civil servants or employees working on contract basis who are covered by the Retirement Fund (TÜRK-İŞ, 1999: 394).

It can also be observed that the increase in the educational levels of women has contributed to a certain degree to close this gap, especially in the public sector. In 1994, the monthly wages of university graduated women in the public sector is 76 percent of men at the same educational level, while it is 68 percent in the private sector. At higher administrative positions the wages of women get closer to men's especially in the public sector with 95.6 percent, while it is 84 percent in the private sector (ECEVİT, 2000: 168-169).

Another study based on the data from the 1987 Household Income and Consumption Expenditure Survey finds the earnings gap between male and female workers as 40 percent and at all educational levels women tend to earn less than men (KASNAKOĞLU/DAYIOĞLU, 1997: 100). While 40.5 percent of the earnings gap can be explained by the variables of human capital such as schooling, experience etc., the rest difference is a result of discrimination against women in the labor market (KASNAKOĞLU/DAYIOĞLU, 1997: 116).

The most common practice which opens the way to wage differences between men and women is the concentration of women in non-qualified, low paid sectors and occupations, due to the distinction made between "men's jobs" and "women's jobs". Women usually work without any form of social security. According to the data of SIS (1996: 55), the percentage rate of urban women working without social security has been 56.3 compared to 29 percent in men during 1988-1993.

The WEP project also included an investigation which aimed the evaluation of job guaranteed vocational training courses organized by the Turkish Employment Agency. According to the results of this investigation, young girls and women who have been provided with work after getting their certificates from the Turkish Employment Agency's courses on computer aided accounting, textile and tourism, were generally employed with low payments and without social security although they were employed in workplaces in the formal sector. 65 percent of the trainees continued to work in their first jobs

after finishing the course and 35 percent changed their workplaces (AKHUN et al., 1999: 127).⁸ The most important reasons mentioned by the trainees for changing workplaces were: “low wages” (47.5 percent), “finding a job with higher wages and better work conditions” (41.7 percent), “the unfair and authoritarian attitudes of their managers” (30.8 percent), “having no social security” (27.5 percent), “working under the burden of duties unrelated with their vocational training” (20.8 percent) (AKHUN et al., 1999: 135).

The results of another research project under WEP, conducted in the various branches of food industry (such as dairy, flour, tobacco, fruit and vegetables) where women workers are highly concentrated, have reflected that half of the female workers are paid minimum wages (KORAY et al., 1999: 160-161).⁹ Yet the proportion of men working with minimum wages among the male workers in the same branches is not only lower (18 percent), but the range in wages is also wider. By providing men with a different status, permanent staff positions and thus higher wages, their commitment to the workplace for longer duration is ensured (KORAY et al., 1999: 162). It has also been observed that the proportion of women working with minimum wages is even higher, up to 80 to 100 percent, in workplaces not affiliated to labor unions and in those which work mostly under subcontracting conditions.

A rather indirect indication of the employment of women with low wages and without social security is also found in Özar et al. (2000: 45) and Demirel et al. (1999: 117) studies, which have been mentioned before. Both of these studies have reflected that around 40 to 50 percent of unemployed women surveyed had previously worked without social security. They also found out that the primary requirement of women looking for work was to find “a job with social security”. While 63 percent of women looking for work preferred a

8 In the research “Contribution of Vocational Training Courses to Women’s Employment” the target of investigation were female trainees who have attended job guaranteed courses in new developing areas of work as well for more traditional vocations. The sample was selected among trainees who participated these courses during 1993-1994 in four cities of Turkey. The quantitative data was collected from 304 employed trainees and 56 not employed trainees as well 31 employers, 24 training course organizers and 52 trainers.

9 The study titled “Conditions of Women in Food Industry and Their Future” was carried out in İzmir. The sample of the study was selected among regular and seasonal workers from 8 firms including public and private enterprises. Data was collected from 350 female and 100 male workers through face-to-face standardized questionnaires. Also in-depth interviews were carried out with 5 women from different firms on their work histories and changing conditions of work.

lower paid job with social security, only 29 percent have said that they would prefer a well paid job even if it is without social security (DEMIREL et al. 1999: 182).

The investigation in the banking sector has shown that in spite of its formally institutionalized structure and employment of a large number of qualified female labor force, the wage discrimination between men and women still exists but in an indirect way through favoring men in promotions, in compensations and other practices increasing their wage levels. In the in-depth interviews one of the female employees expressed her views on the wage differences as follows:

“There is no difference between the net wages of men and women. But there are differences in the compensations we receive. For example there is a compensation you receive when you earn points depending on your aptitudes. But there are some points that are totally left up to the decision of the manager. (...) Men have the priority when it comes to these points. Our assistant directors meet to give us points. Even if you, as a woman, have better qualifications, men always get higher points. They favor men. They say ‘He’s a man, he supports a family’. My assistant director once expressed this to me by saying ‘come on, what do you need the money for?’. Both male and female managers believe a woman has some material support anyway.” [36 years old, married, university graduate, assistant to department manager] (EYÜBOĞLU et al., 2000: 181)

In the study in health sector, which is also a sector employing a high proportion of women, it has also been observed that female doctors are discouraged to choose a field of expertise such as orthopedics, urology, surgery which usually bring higher incomes, even though there is no official difference between men's and women's wages (TULUN et al., 2000: 83-84).¹⁰

IV.4 Promotion

Studies conducted in various lines of work have indicated that promotions of women at the workplace are also negatively affected by their gender role. Especially the study conducted in the banking sector provides us

10 The project “Women in the Health Sector” was a qualitative study based on data from medical and non-medical personnel from 5 public and 5 private hospitals in Istanbul. 36 women and 16 men were interviewed in-depth and also 5 focus groups were organized.

with many examples. One of the employees has explained the problems related with women's promotion as follows:

“A woman will inevitably need maternal leave or medical leave during pregnancy, delivery and afterwards. She will then be away from her job for a certain period and miss out on some opportunities. There are general examinations at the bank every 3 to 4 years. Colleagues having reached a certain position take part in them and are promoted. We have many female colleagues who couldn't take part in the examinations because of their pregnancy or delivery and whose chances for promotion have been weakened” [29 years old, married, university graduate] (EYUBOGLU et al., 2000: 62).

In addition to male managers' prejudices and negative attitudes towards them, women themselves usually act as the society in general expects from them as 'women' and as a result, they do not apply for positions of work which may demand more responsibility, long hours of work and travel. The hard work and efforts which women need to put into their work in order to reach managerial levels often discourage them since they also have the responsibility of caring for their home and family. An executive woman has stated:

“To reach this position I had to work three times as much as a man. Three of the men who started out as experts at the same time with me became deputy directors at least five years before me. That's how they became unit directors much before me. Different interactions, different influences affect this process. You realize this, but you can't do anything to overcome it” [40 years old, not married, university graduate, assistant director with 16 years of work life] (EYÜBOĞLU et. al., 2000: 202).

Women have usually stated reasons such as missing the examinations of promotion because of maternal leave, not being able to participate in training programs in other provinces, not being hired as inspectors from the start as reasons delaying their promotion. On the other hand, male employees in the same study have usually explained the difficulties women face in being promoted to managerial positions with their limited interest and understanding of politics and especially the political maneuvers which are often employed during this process.

V. Conclusion: Mentalities Fostering Discrimination and the Strategies to Struggle Against Them

In his article entitled “Aspects of Industrial Life”, Laurence S. Moore has described the working life of women in Istanbul in 1920s as follows:

“As an excuse for paying women lower wages, some employers say that women accept lower wages than men because they mostly stay at home. It has been expressed a few times that female workers, as a rule, do not behave professionally at work, considering work only as a temporary occupation until they get married. In eastern countries it is still almost universally believed that a woman’s destiny is marriage” (MOORE, 1995: 165).

The period mentioned by Moore is the beginning of 20th century. Now, one can take a look at the viewpoints of two men, first one being the representative of a labor union and the second one the manager of a bank with a large number of female employees, evaluating women’s work at the end of the century:

“A woman should balance her work according to her duties at home. (...) I don’t agree that men should participate in housework. The woman should work outside considering her responsibilities at home. She can work anywhere, OK. But she should adapt her job to her activities at home. She should have a job that doesn’t keep her from doing the housework. That’s the kind of job she needs. That’s the rule. Men have the primary responsibility of the family. So women should have the responsibility of the household management and things such as cleaning and washing” (KOZAKLI et al., 1998: 135).¹¹

“Which professions should women enter? They should become teachers. Then they have more time left for their work at home. And since they’re more patient they’ll make good teachers. A mother’s love for children is different than that of a father. Women should give love to their children, take care of them. This is the right thing to do.” [50 years old, married, university graduate] (EYUBOGLU et al., 2000: 59).

The statements indicate that women’s position in the working life is still being evaluated in the same way by giving the priority to their role as mothers

11 The project “Labor Unions and Political Parties: Institutional Traditions and Cognitive Structures With Particular Reference to Women’s Employment” was a qualitative study. The data was collected through discourse analysis from the programs and other documents of labor unions and political parties and also through in-depth interviews with the representatives of different labor unions and people holding various organizational positions in different political parties.

and housewives which is considered their primary socially accepted duty. These viewpoints also manifest the attitude of men in decision-making levels to preserve their advantaged position by deeming women suitable to inferior jobs, putting barriers to women who want to enter "their" jobs and emphasizing how women are different from men because of their "natural" roles as wives and mothers (RESKİN, 1991). Of course this doesn't mean that nothing has changed since the beginning of the century. Compared to that period a larger number of women in Turkey are working in various sectors, including non-traditional ones and although limited in number, some have reached quite influential positions. Despite the insufficiency of existing laws, women have not only more permanent and irreplaceable positions but also more security in working life, at least in the formal sector.

However, the fact that the percentage of women has increased to a certain degree in so called non-traditional occupations and that there is a framework of necessary legal protection for women in work life as a result of the international conventions, this is not enough to challenge and change radically the mentalities and traditional approaches concerning women's role in society. First of all the Turkish industry has not been successful in creating employment opportunities in the last twenty years. This is especially true for women, because even in the sub-sectors of the economy which have shown some development in certain periods, the demand for female women workers remained very limited. Therefore, the unqualified women were mostly left with the choice of working in the informal sector with lower wages and usually without any form of social security either outside their homes or home-based. This is a disadvantaged position for women from the start not only because of economic reasons such as lower wages and lack of security, but also because these forms of labor also strengthen the beliefs that women's place is primarily her home and her position in the labor market outside home is marginal and temporary. It is also true that women themselves are likely to prefer such jobs to be able to carry their domestic chores, especially the care activities. None-market care activities (taking care of the children, the old aged people and the ill) of women did not change through the years; in fact in the periods of economic crisis, the domestic work load of women increased considerably since most of the services provided in the welfare states of the developed world to support women's care activities at home are still very insufficient in Turkey.

Besides the negative consequences of the existing economy, it should be emphasized that the values about the gender roles in the society are well established in the organizations where policies related with conditions of employment, legal rights at work, wage levels etc. are determined. Therefore,

even if the international conventions open new horizons, the policy decisions and the actual practice may lag behind.

On the other hand, women work in higher status occupations especially in the public sector in Turkey and this is the sector where the wage differences between men and women is lower. However, the share of the public sector in employment is decreasing; it is not providing sufficient employment opportunities and the number of upper position management jobs for women are very limited. Although the number of female students in many new non-traditional branches in the universities has been increasing, by itself, this can not be taken as 'good news' regarding women's employment. If new investments are not directed to sectors which could also demand qualified women in relatively higher positions, new perspectives for women's employment cannot be expected in the near future. In this process, it is vitally important to hear voices from decision-making positions for policies supporting women.

As the new developments in the economies all over the world confront women with new forms of labor which seem to be more suitable to their gender roles and therefore more likely to be preferred by them: at the same time they define women as unskilled cheap laborers by lowering their wages, cutting down on social protection, restricting promotion, organization etc. which in no way serve to change women's status and role in the society. Future research in Turkey should study more deeply what is happening to women's employment within the framework of global economic developments and the trends of development in the Turkish economy. This will reflect to us the perspectives of development in the informal and formal sectors, new occupations and new forms of labor especially in the services, what is changing in terms of discriminations at work (if any) and which factors are affecting this change.

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