

# Decent Work in the Turkish Labor Market: An Empirical Study from a Gender Perspective

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**Abstract:** Lower labor market participation compared to men and their concentration in lower-status jobs pose a substantial barrier to women's access to decent work in Türkiye. Furthermore, Covid-19 pandemic has had a disproportionately adverse impact on women. This study provides a comprehensive examination of the concept of decent work within the Turkish labor market, emphasizing its gendered dimensions and the shifts induced by Covid-19 pandemic. We estimate two separate probit models for decent and non-decent employment by using microdata from the Household Labor Force Survey (HLFS) spanning 2019 to 2023. We run separate regressions for females and males to examine potential gender differences in the likelihood of decent and non-decent employment. Our findings highlight persistent gender disparities in access to decent work, with women disproportionately represented in non-decent employment. This overrepresentation is particularly notable in the services and agricultural sectors and among married or divorced women, suggesting the pervasive influence of societal norms and structural barriers. The U-shaped relationship between educational attainment and non-decent employment among women further underscores the complexity of these dynamics, where higher education paradoxically coincides with increased non-decent employment in some contexts. Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, disproportionately impacting women's employment due to their concentration in sectors most affected by economic disruptions and their dual burden of unpaid caregiving responsibilities.

**Keywords:** Decent work, Gender wage gap, Covid-19

**Jel Codes:** J80, J31, J16

## *Türkiye İşgücü Piyasasında İnsana Yakıvr İş: Cinsiyet Perspektifinden Ampirik Bir Araştırma*

**Öz:** Erkeklerle kıyasla işgücü piyasasına katılımlarının düşük olması ve düşük statülü işlerde yoğunlaşmaları, Türkiye'de kadınların insana yakıvr işlere erişiminin önünde önemli bir engel teşkil etmektedir. Ayrıca, Covid-19 salgını kadınlar üzerinde orantısız derecede olumsuz bir etki yaratmıştır. Bu çalışma, Türkiye işgücü piyasasında insana yakıvr iş kavramını kapsamlı bir şekilde incelemekte ve kavramın toplumsal cinsiyet boyutları ile Covid-19 salgınının yol açtığı değişimlere dikkat çekmektedir. 2019-2023 yıllarına ait Hanehalkı İşgücü Araştırması (HİA) mikro verileri kullanılarak, insana yakıvr ve yakıvr olmayan işe ilişkin iki ayrı probit modeli tahmin edilmiştir. Ayrıca, cinsiyet farklılıklarını incelemek amacıyla düzgün ve düzgün olmayan iş bulma olasılıkları kadın ve erkeğe ait farklı regresyonlarla incelenmiştir. Bulgularımız, düzgün işe erişimde kalıcı cinsiyet eşitsizliklerinin varlığını ve kadınların düzgün olmayan istihdamda orantısız bir şekilde temsil edildiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu durum, özellikle hizmetler ve tarım sektörlerinde ve evli ya da boşanmış kadınlar arasında belirgin bir şekilde gözlemlenmektedir. Bu da toplumsal normların ve yapısal engellerin yaygın etkisini akıllara getirmektedir. Kadınlar arasında eğitim düzeyi ile insana yakıvr olmayan istihdam arasındaki U şeklindeki ilişki, bu dinamiklerin karmaşıklığını daha da vurgulamaktadır. Diğer yandan, Covid-19 salgını ekonomik aksaklıklardan en fazla etkilenen sektörlerde yoğunlaşan kadınların istihdamını orantısız biçimde etkileyerek mevcut kırılganlıkları daha da artırmıştır.

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**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Düzgün iş, Cinsiyete dayalı ücret farkı, Covid-19

**Jel Kodları:** J80, J31, J16

## 1. Introduction

Decent work for all men and women has become the central objective of International Labor Organization (ILO) since 1999. The provision of decent and productive employment opportunities, characterized by equity, freedom, security, and dignity, has been strongly advocated for both parties.

The concept of decent work is multifaceted and can be understood through several dimensions that applies to both formal and informal sectors and address the needs and rights of workers while promoting social and economic development. The first dimension is employment opportunities. This involves ensuring access to work that are productive and sustainable for all since it is not possible to have decent work in the absence of work itself. The concept of 'work' encompasses all forms of economic activity, including self-employment, unpaid family labor, and wage employment. It extends to both formal and informal sectors within a country, all of which fall under the broader framework of decent work. The second dimension involves freedom to work. It encompasses the fundamental right to work, particularly safeguarding individuals from forced and compulsory labor, slavery, and establishing a minimum age to prevent child labor, while prohibiting those below this age from engaging in work. Additionally, it upholds the freedom of workers to organize and ensures protection against discriminatory practices. The third dimension is the productive work which refers to employment that is both acceptable and adequate, enabling workers to meet the needs of themselves and their families. Additionally, it supports sustainable development in the context of globalization, fostering competitiveness for both enterprises and countries. Equity in work is the fourth dimension. Decent work emphasizes the principle of equity, which ensures that workers receive fair compensation for their work, irrespective of gender, race, or other factors. Furthermore, this fosters a discrimination-free environment, ensuring access to employment and the ability to achieve a harmonious balance between work and family life. The fifth dimension is work security referring safe, healthy, and dignified working environments. This includes protection from workplace hazards, the provision of necessary protective equipment, and ensuring that workers' physical and mental well-being are prioritized. The sixth dimension of decent work is dignity at work. A dignified work mandates that workers be treated with respect, have the ability to voice concerns, and actively engage in decision-making regarding their working conditions.

In recent years, it has become crucial to establish a unified framework of decent work that applies to both developing and developed countries as the nature of labor and work have transformed. Consequently, the focus has shifted toward examining how the development process itself can generate social divisions, foster exclusion, and perpetuate marginalization based on gender, ethnicity, and religion. In this line, the strategic agenda has lately been designed through four objectives: full employment, improved levels of socio-economic security, universal respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, and the strengthening of social dialogue. Central concern to this agenda is the gender equality which is also the main focus of this research. The first necessitates an economic environment capable of fostering investment opportunities, stimulating entrepreneurship, advancing skill development, and ensuring sustainable livelihoods. The second is to broaden social protection to encompass all workers enabling them to enjoy safe working conditions and thereby promoting productivity and inclusion within ethical work practices. The third is to ensure the protection of workers' rights and entitlements in the workplace, enabling them to gain recognition and respect especially for marginalized or disadvantaged groups. And the fourth is to assist workers in resolving conflicts and to foster the promotion of social dialogue.

In a report on decent work in Türkiye, the ILO asserted that 'the creation of decent jobs is the most significant challenge Türkiye must confront'. Access to decent work still remains a significant challenge for many individuals in the country where unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment continues to be a main concern. Additionally, a substantial portion of the workforce endures long working hours, receives

low wages, and lacks adequate social security coverage. These characteristics of the labor market constrain individuals' freedom to choose employment opportunities. Furthermore, it often leads to career decisions being made without adequate exploration, which in turn can result in a misalignment between employees' personal aspirations and their work environment. As a result, individuals who are employed or seeking employment severely experience insecurities. These insights indicate that the need for access to decent work in Türkiye has become urgent. This is one of the primary reasons that motivates us to undertake the present study.

Another aspect is that women are among the most vulnerable groups in labor economics since they are particularly affected due to their lack of work experience, job-search skills, access to social networks that provide employment information, and the often-limited possession of market-demanded skills. They are disproportionately affected by the contraction of formal employment and decent work, which are often characterized by widespread precariousness, low wages, and a lack of coverage under labor laws or social protection. These limitations they face are direct outcomes of women's disadvantages in education, the absence of an organized voice and bargaining power, restrictions on labor market mobility, a relatively high participation in part-time or temporary employment, and overt discrimination. Türkiye is no exception here. The cultural emphasis on traditional gender roles is a distinct feature of the Turkish labor market where women are subjected to low wages, are discriminated in job interviews, and face unfair dismissals. Lower labor market participation compared to men, their concentration in lower-status jobs, and their involvement in temporary and precarious employment make women more disadvantaged than men in the Turkish labor market. These factors pose a substantial barrier to women's access to decent work and in turn, women are less likely to be represented in a decent work profile in Türkiye. As a result, the connection between the concept of decent work and gender equality becomes evident when considering its underlying principles and indicators.

Another reason triggers us to conduct such a study is to investigate labor market impacts of Covid-19 pandemic. Since its onset, Covid-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted global labor markets and reshaped the nature of work. It transitioned from a health crisis into an economic crisis, with far-reaching implications for informal labor, gender inequality, employment, and poverty. The pandemic has underscored the challenges many workers worldwide face in accessing decent work. It has altered priorities, working conditions, and environments, as well as employees' perceptions of what constitutes decent work. Like many other countries, Türkiye has experienced significant disruptions in its labor market structure. Among the negative social and economic consequences of the pandemic are substantial job losses and alterations to working conditions. In this context, the concept of "decent work" has emerged as a critical issue.

Previous literature recognizes that the impacts of the health and economic crisis on the labor market may not be uniform across different demographic groups. It has been argued that Covid-19 pandemic has had a disproportionately adverse impact on women globally. First, women's employment losses were disproportionately higher than men's, since the pandemic hit the sectors such as retail, hospitality services, feminized manufacturing, and domestic work and informal employment where women concentrate. Second, women are expected to be more affected by the increased childcare responsibilities resulting from school and daycare closures during the pandemic due to the traditional division of household labor. As a result, the impact of the pandemic on gender equality has become one of the foremost issues in policy discussions.

With a motivation of these aspects, the contribution of this study is threefold: First, as will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, the assessment of decent work in Turkish labor market has been undertaken by only few studies with an interest of measuring it with statistical indicators. Rather, the present work aims to examine the trajectory of decent work in Türkiye using periodical administrative microdata. It is the first study

achieving this, to the best of our knowledge. Second, it comparatively analyzes the trajectory of decent work for women with respect to men. And third, it provides a comparison of decent work profiles between pre-pandemic and post-pandemic period both within and across group of genders empirically.

We utilize microdata from the Household Labor Force Survey (HLFS) spanning 2019 to 2023. Conducted monthly, the HLFS generates quarterly moving averages of labor market outcomes. The dataset provides a representative snapshot of the population, as all observations are weighted to reflect their frequency in the broader population.

The HLFS microdata does not directly or instrumentally categorize employment into "decent" or "non-decent" categories. To address this, we construct these classifications using variables related to employment type (registered/unregistered), employment status (part-time/full-time), and labor force status (employed/unemployed/out of the labor force). We estimate two separate probit models for decent and non-decent employment. The explanatory variables selected for both models include age, age squared, education, marital status, household size, and the number of employed individuals in the household, as these are considered the most significant determinants of employment probability. Additionally, we run separate regressions for females and males to examine potential gender differences in the likelihood of decent and non-decent employment.

The structure of the study is organized as follows. Next section reviews a related literature on the subject. Section 3 describes the data and explains our methodology. In Section 4, we present and discuss the results, and Section 5 concludes.

## 2. Related Literature

The conceptualizations of decent work in the labor market literature have primarily been focused on macro research perspectives centering around global labor market indicators. (e.g., Barrientos et al., 2011; Burchell et al., 2014; Blustein, 2016; Ferraro et al., 2021). In these studies, the assessment of decent work has been conducted at the country level. On the other side, several other researchers have argued that the macro-level research overlooks certain aspects of the issue and thereby highlighting the need for individual and micro-level assessments of decent work. Anker et al. (2002, 2003) construct the foundation for developing a core set of decent work indicators. Their work begins with a clear conceptualization of the concept and its dimensions, shedding light on the implications for creating statistical indicators. In another study, Bescond et al. (2003) select seven key indicators of decent work from the 30 identified in Anker et al.'s previous work (2003). These indicators assess decent work deficits (DWDs) related to factors such as hourly pay, working hours, unemployment, school enrollment, youth unemployment rates, the male-female labor force participation gap, and the lack of pensions in old age. In a separate study, Bonnet et al. (2002) develop an illustrative decent work index, correlating it with the UNDP's Human Development Index and GDP per capita, while showing an inverse relationship with income inequality. Standing (2002), in his paper based on people's security surveys, constructs a micro-level decent work index (DWI). This index, with values ranging from 0 to 1, aggregates indicators such as labor market security, employment security, job security, work security, skill reproduction security, income security, and representation security.

Another significant body of literature has emerged around the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT) developed by Duffy et al. (2016), which emphasizes the critical role of work in human life and the structural and psychological factors that influence working conditions. They identified five key characteristics central to defining decent work: (a) safe working conditions, both physically and interpersonally; (b) sufficient time for rest and personal leisure; (c) organizational values that align with family and social values; (d) adequate compensation; and (e) access to fair healthcare. Building on Duffy et al.'s (2016) work, Duffy et al. (2017) develop a 15-item self-report Decent Work Scale (DWS) at the individual level, using a sample of working adults from the United States. This scale has been widely used in various countries (e.g., Allan et al., 2019; H. Kim et al.,

2022), including Türkiye (H. Kim et al., 2023; Kozan et al., 2019), often through a variable-centered approach, particularly to test the core propositions of the PWT. A year later, Ferraro et al. (2018) introduce a 31 item Decent Work Questionnaire (DWQ), which encompasses seven dimensions: "fundamental principles and values at work, adequate working time and workload, fulfilling and productive work, meaningful retribution for the exercise of citizenship, social protection, opportunities, and health and safety." Büyükgöze-Kavas and Autin (2019) assess the validity of the Decent Work Scale (DWS) using a sample of Turkish working adults. They have explored culture-specific perceptions of decent work by collecting qualitative data through an open-ended question aimed at identifying the qualities participants deemed essential for a job to be considered decent. Their findings have revealed that the overall DWS score, along with the five subscale scores, showed a positive correlation with job satisfaction and the meaningfulness of work, while being negatively correlated with intentions to withdraw from employment. Çarkıt (2024) employs latent profile analysis to examine the interrelationships among the components of decent work. He demonstrates that work volition and social class significantly increased the likelihood of workers being categorized in the decent work group. Additionally, women were more likely to belong to the indecent work-low healthcare-dominant group, while workers with bachelor's degrees or higher were more likely to be classified in the low compensation-low rest group.

The gender dimension of decent work underscores the importance of promoting gender equality and empowering women in the workforce (Hepple, 2001; Rai et al., 2019). This includes ensuring equal pay for equal work, facilitating access to education and training, and addressing workplace discrimination and harassment. King (2008) argues that while women's participation in paid employment has increased globally, they remain segregated into specific types of employment. A combination of factors, including household responsibilities, educational background, discrimination, social norms, and personal choices, leads women to be more likely than men to engage in part-time or temporary work, work in the informal sector, perform home-based or unpaid labor in family enterprises, or occupy jobs typically at the lower end of the pay and status spectrum. In her study on decent work for women in Nigeria, Fapohunda (2012) notes that women are more likely than men to work from home, be self-employed in the informal sector, or serve as domestic workers in private households, often isolated from other workers with shared interests. The lack of access to decent work is a significant cause of poverty among women. Bletsas and Charlesworth (2013) argue that decent work is a contested concept, as commitment to decent work does not always align with a commitment to gender equality. Charlesworth and Macdonald (2015) observe that developed countries contend that the Decent Work Agenda (DWA) is more relevant for developing economies, reflecting a perceived lack of applicability in more developed nations. In these countries, the challenge lies in surpassing minimum work standards and integrating gender equality into the promotion of decent work.

Studies examining decent work within the context of gender in the Turkish labor market remain relatively limited. Dedeoğlu and Gökmen (2021) offer a comprehensive analysis of women's access to decent work in Türkiye for the ILO. Ünlütürk-Ulutaş and Durusoy-Öztepe (2021) investigate gender discrimination through qualitative research conducted in two cities, Konya and Bursa. Their findings suggest that the barriers to women's entry into decent jobs differ across cities, influenced by distinct patriarchal norms and the specific characteristics of each city's labor market. Gürcan (2022), in her exploration of discrimination against female employees, argues that women are exposed to discriminatory work environments, enduring low wages, emotional pressures, and unfair dismissals. Additionally, Çiftçi (2023) explores the link between gender equality and informal employment in Türkiye. Baloğlu and Güngör Delen (2024) trace the evolution of decent work, using the year 2000 as a baseline, and focus on nine key indicators defined by the ILO, with particular emphasis on gender dynamics.

Furthermore, İlkaracan and Memiş (2021), Aldan et al. (2021), and Özkubat et al. (2023) while investigating the effects of Covid-19 pandemic on Turkish labor markets, have partially presented the gender-based results in the context of the decent work.

As mentioned earlier, Covid-19 crisis has underscored the global challenges of accessing decent work (Allan et al., 2023; Blustein et al., 2020; Blustein et al., 2023). Ghida et al. (2022) report significant declines in women's paid employment across various regions of the developing world, as evidenced by a 12-city study spanning five urban locations, which specifically highlighted informal paid activities in domestic work, home-based work, street vending, and waste management. Parajuli and Shrestha (2024) analyze the impact of Covid-19 on employment and decent work conditions within Nepalese organizations. They conclude that the pandemic has exacerbated social inequality and the lack of decent work, disproportionately affecting the most marginalized populations. As industries adapt to the pandemic's effects, the new workplace norms and standards emerging in industrial estates related to decent work are increasingly influencing workers' conditions.

As for Turkish labor market, İlkaracan and Memiş (2021) evaluate the gendered economic impact of Covid-19 pandemic, focusing on two distinct areas: unpaid and paid work. Utilizing a unique dataset from a survey conducted under pandemic lockdown conditions in Türkiye in May 2020 (The Life Style Survey [LSS], conducted by KONDA, an independent survey company), they have analyzed the direction and relative magnitude of changes in women's and men's paid, unpaid, and total work time during the pandemic. They have examined how these changes varied depending on shifts in labor market status, employment conditions, and demographic and household characteristics. In addition to investigating gender gaps in paid and unpaid work time, the study explored how stay-at-home measures influenced men's participation in household labor and the disparities experienced by women. The study has found that although men's participation in unpaid work increased, particularly among those working from home, the relative increase for women further exacerbated the gender gap in unpaid work. The gender gap in paid work narrowed due to less disruption in women's employment and a relatively greater decrease in men's paid work. However, the total workload for employed women reached levels that made it increasingly difficult to maintain a decent work-life balance. Furthermore, Aldan et al. (2021) analyze the labor market effects of Covid-19 pandemic using actual data from the pandemic period to identify the variations of these effects across different demographic groups within the Turkish labor market. Utilizing quarterly Turkish household labor force surveys covering the period from 2005 to 2020, they discover that the pandemic led to a decline in both employment and labor force participation for nearly all groups. However, the impact on women was notably more pronounced than that on men. In another study, Erdem-Karahanoglu and Kumaş (2022), focusing on young employees, emphasize the importance of labor market segmentation and show that the sector, occupation and region are crucial parameters in probability of employment in a good job for 15-29 age group. Özkubat et al. (2023) show the impact of Covid-19 on working hours. Using the quarterly microdata from the TurkStat Household Labor Force Surveys and the Oxford Covid-19 Government Response Tracker database, they find that the most significant loss of work hours occurred during the second quarter of 2020. Moreover, they present evidence indicating that women, youth, and workers in informal and temporary employment experienced a smaller reduction in working hours during the early phase of the pandemic. Their predictions suggest that for every 10-point increase in the stringency of restrictions, the gender gap in working hours would narrow by approximately 0.1 hours.

### 3. Data and Methodology

#### 3.1. Data

This analysis utilizes microdata from the Household Labor Force Survey (HLFS) spanning 2019 to 2023. Conducted monthly, the HLFS generates quarterly moving averages of labor market outcomes. The dataset provides a representative snapshot of the population, as all observations are weighted to reflect their frequency in the broader population.

The HLFS microdata does not directly or instrumentally categorize employment into "decent" or "non-decent" categories. To address this, we construct these classifications using variables related to employment type (registered/unregistered), employment status (part-time/full-time), and labor force status (employed/unemployed/out of the labor force). We excluded individuals outside the labor force, as they are not actively engaged in employment-seeking activities and focused on individuals aged 14 and above to construct the DecentEmp variable.

An individual is classified as a decent employee if they are employed, registered, and working full-time. Specifically, DecentEmp is assigned a value of 1 if the individual is employed (Employed = 1), works full-time (FullTimeEmp = 1), and is registered (RegisteredEmp = 1); otherwise, it is set to 0. Non-decent employment is defined as any form of unregistered or part-time work. Thus, individuals in registered part-time employment, unregistered part-time employment, or unregistered full-time employment are classified as non-decent employees. The NonDecentEmp variable is set to 1 if the individual is employed (Employed = 1) but either unregistered (RegisteredEmp = 0) or working part-time (FullTimeEmp = 0); otherwise, it is set to 0.

Our microdata sample consists of decent employees, non-decent employees, and unemployed individuals, excluding those outside the labor force. The analysis explores the dimensions of decent and non-decent employment, focusing on sector, marital status, firm size, education level, and distinctions between public/private, formal/informal, and full-time/part-time employment. Descriptive tables are compiled for each year. However, the study highlights data for 2019 (pre-pandemic), 2020 (pandemic), and 2021 and 2023 (post-pandemic recovery).

Table 1 presents the distribution of male and female workers in decent and non-decent employment across these dimensions for 2019 and 2020.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Employees (%), 2019, 2020

Categories	Year 2019				Year 2020			
	Non-Decent		Decent		Non-Decent		Decent	
	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.
Sector								
Agriculture	48.1	51.9	13.2	86.8	44.9	55.1	11.6	88.4
Industry	33.9	66.1	21.7	78.3	35.7	64.3	21.5	78.5
Construction	1.9	98.1	7.0	93.0	2.3	97.7	6.8	93.2
Trade	24.4	75.6	25.8	74.2	22.6	77.4	26.5	73.5
Services	45.2	54.8	33.1	66.9	47.4	52.6	33.1	66.9
Marital_Status								
Single	29.5	70.5	33.2	66.8	28.7	71.3	32.8	67.2
Married	43.2	56.8	23.6	76.4	42.0	58.0	23.7	76.3
Divorced	49.1	50.9	49.5	50.5	48.8	51.2	48.3	51.7
Widowed	68.9	31.1	58.4	41.6	68.7	31.3	60.7	39.3
Public/Private								
Public	38.2	61.8	25.4	74.6	36.8	63.2	25.3	74.7
Private	78.3	21.7	32.9	67.1	76.6	23.4	32.7	67.3
Firm Size								
1-10 Employees	41.3	58.7	22.3	77.7	39.8	60.2	22.9	77.1
11-19 " "	34.2	65.8	31.0	69.0	35.2	64.8	31.4	68.6
20-49 " "	33.9	66.1	31.1	68.9	42.2	57.8	30.9	69.1
50+ " "	42.6	57.4	29.0	71.0	44.6	55.4	28.2	71.8
Unknown	31.6	68.4	25.2	74.8	24.4	75.6	27.8	72.2
Register								
UnregEmp	40.0	60.0	-	-	39.2	60.8	-	-
RegEmp	53.2	46.8	27.2	72.8	47.0	53.0	27.1	72.9
Employment Type								
FullTime	35.0	65.0	27.2	72.8	33.4	66.6	27.1	72.9
PartTime	56.4	43.6	-	-	51.8	48.2	-	-
Education Level								
NoEdu	67.7	32.3	32.8	67.2	69.2	30.8	28.1	71.9
PrimarySch	40.6	59.4	20.9	79.1	40.5	59.5	21.1	78.9
SecondarySch	31.0	69.0	15.8	84.2	28.5	71.5	15.8	84.2
VocHighSch	27.6	72.4	21.6	78.4	26.4	73.6	19.9	80.1
HighSch	31.3	68.7	24.9	75.1	30.5	69.5	25.1	74.9
University	38.4	61.6	38.5	61.5	40.6	59.4	38.3	61.7
MastersOrPhD	40.0	60.0	41.8	58.2	42.0	58.0	41.6	58.4
Total	40.8	59.2	27.2	72.8	40	60	27.1	72.9

Source: Author's own work.

### Pre-Pandemic Period Distribution Dynamics

Women are overrepresented in non-decent employment compared to decent employment. In 2019, women constituted 33% of total employment, with 27.2% in decent jobs but 40.8% in non-decent roles. Sectoral analysis reveals that agriculture and services account for the highest shares of women in non-decent employment. In 2019, women comprised 48.1% of non-decent agricultural workers and 45.2% in services; this share rose to 47.4% in the service sector during the pandemic. Conversely, agriculture exhibited pronounced male dominance in decent employment, as most women in the sector were unregistered, limiting their representation in decent roles.

#### Marital Status and Employment Type

Marriage exerts contrasting effects on employment patterns by gender. Among women, marriage reduces participation in decent employment while increasing non-decent employment. For instance, in 2019, 33.2% of single women were in decent employment, compared to only 23.6% of married women. In non-decent roles, the proportions rose from 29.5% for single women to 43.2% for married women. For men, marriage had the opposite effect: married men were more likely to occupy decent employment, while single men were overrepresented in non-decent jobs.

#### Public vs. Private Sector

In 2019, 78.3% of women in non-decent employment were in the private sector, though this share slightly decreased during the pandemic. The public sector displayed



male dominance in both decent and non-decent roles, a pattern that remained stable during the pandemic.

#### Firm Size and Gender Distribution

Firm size influences gender dynamics differently across employment types. As firm size increases, the proportion of women in non-decent employment declines among small and medium-sized firms but rises sharply in the largest firms. This suggests a dual pattern where the smallest and largest firms exhibit higher concentrations of women in non-decent roles. For decent employment, however, women's share increases consistently with firm size.

#### Registered and Unregistered Employment

In 2019, women comprised 53.2% of non-decent registered employees, but this share fell to 47% during the pandemic. In unregistered employment, the female share remained slightly below the overall average in both years.

#### Full-Time vs. Part-Time Employment

The pandemic caused a notable decline in women's representation in non-decent part-time employment, falling from 56.4% in 2019 to 51.8% in 2020.

#### Education Level and Employment Patterns

A complex, non-linear relationship emerges between education and women's representation in non-decent employment. Up to high school, higher educational attainment correlates with a decline in women's share of non-decent jobs. Beyond high school, however, this trend reverses, with higher education levels increasing women's representation in non-decent roles. Women without formal education are most overrepresented in non-decent jobs, whereas men with vocational high school diplomas have the highest share. In decent employment, women with advanced degrees (Master's or PhDs) dominate, while secondary school graduates represent the largest group of men.

The findings underscore significant gender disparities in employment, particularly the overrepresentation of women in non-decent roles and the nuanced impact of education and marital status on employment outcomes. These trends highlight critical areas for policy intervention to enhance the quality and equity of employment opportunities.

#### Post-Pandemic Period Distribution Dynamics

Table 2 below presents the distribution of decent and non-decent male and female employees across the specified dimensions for the years 2021 and 2023. An important observation is that the female share in non-decent employment has further risen, reaching 53.9% in the services sector by the final year of the analyzed period. This suggests that, post-pandemic, the services sector has emerged as the predominant sector for non-decent female employment.

Additionally, the percentage of married and divorced women in non-decent employment has increased relative to single women, with married women still exhibiting a notably lower representation in decent employment compared to their single counterparts.

The non-linear, U-shaped relationship between education level and the share of women in non-decent employment persists. More intriguingly, the proportion of women with Master's or PhD degrees in non-decent jobs has risen to 55.3%. This trend may be attributed to the continued growth of remote work opportunities, though this study does not directly address this phenomenon, as there are no specific or proxy variables for remote employment in the HLFS data.

Finally, the relationship between firm size and the female share of employees in non-decent jobs has become more pronounced after the pandemic, as additional firm size categories have been introduced. The pattern remains U-shaped: in firms up to medium size, the relationship between firm size and the female share in non-decent employment is negative, but it turns positive as firms grow larger. In other words, larger firms tend to have a higher proportion of female employees in non-decent jobs.

**Table 2.** Distribution of Employees (%), 2021, 2023

Category	Year 2021				Year 2023			
	Non-Decent Employees		Decent Employees		Non-Decent Employees		Decent Employees	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Sector								
Agriculture	46.0	54.0	14.5	85.5	46.2	53.8	18.5	81.5
Industry	36.8	63.2	22.3	77.7	39.0	61.0	24.1	75.9
Construction	2.3	97.7	6.5	93.5	2.6	97.4	6.9	93.1
Trade	23.8	76.2	25.9	74.1	26.6	73.4	27.5	72.5
Services	50.0	50.0	33.7	66.3	53.9	46.1	35.2	64.8
Marital Status								
Single	29.2	70.8	32.0	68.0	31.5	68.5	32.2	67.8
Married	43.9	56.1	24.0	76.0	46.0	54.0	25.9	74.1
Divorced	49.7	50.3	48.8	51.2	52.9	47.1	49.8	50.2
Widowed	68.0	32.0	61.7	38.3	68.2	31.8	60.4	39.6
Public/Private								
Private	66.8	33.2	34.0	66.0	67.5	32.5	34.9	65.1
Public	40.6	59.4	25.4	74.6	42.6	57.4	27.3	72.7
Firm Size								
1-9 Employees	41.2	58.8	22.0	78.0	43.4	56.6	28.9	71.1
10-19 " "	35.7	64.3	30.4	69.6	43.3	56.7	23.6	76.4
20-49 " "	45.3	54.7	32.0	68.0	37.0	63.0	31.6	68.4
50-249 " "	52.9	47.1	29.6	70.4	48.6	51.4	32.6	67.4
250+ " "	39.2	60.8	27.3	72.7	50.2	49.8	31.9	68.1
Unknown	55.7	44.3	27.5	72.5	48.1	51.9	29.8	70.2
Register								
UnregEmp	40.3	59.7			42.2	57.8		
RegEmp	51.5	48.5	27.3	72.7	52.4	47.6	28.9	71.1
Employment Type								
FullTime	35.3	64.7	27.3	72.7	37.6	62.4	28.9	71.1
PartTime	55.0	45.0			54.9	45.1		
Education Level								
NoEdu	67.6	32.4	28.0	72.0	71.4	28.6	33.1	66.9
PrimarySch	42.6	57.4	21.1	78.9	43.7	56.3	23.5	76.5
SecondarySch	29.6	70.4	15.7	84.3	30.9	69.1	16.7	83.3
VocHighSch	26.8	73.2	19.5	80.5	32.1	67.9	22.0	78.0
HighSch	33.4	66.6	25.3	74.7	35.4	64.6	26.2	73.8
2YearsCollege	39.5	60.5	35.5	64.5	43.0	57.0	37.6	62.4
University	44.8	55.2	40.7	59.3	49.5	50.5	40.3	59.7
MastersOrPhD	47.0	53.0	40.9	59.1	55.3	44.7	43.7	56.3
Total	41.3	58.7	27.3	72.7	43.4	56.6	29.0	71.0

Source: Author's own work.

The second section of the descriptive statistics examines wage comparisons across the same dimensions as the prior analysis. Weighted average wages for each category and subcategory are calculated using HLFS microdata for 2019 (pre-pandemic), 2020 (pandemic), and 2021 and 2023 (post-pandemic).

Table 3 presents decent-to-non-decent weighted wage ratios by category for 2019 and 2020. Each year's data is divided into two sub-columns under the third main column, displaying the wage ratios for females and males separately.

**Table 3.** Decent/Non-Decent Weighted Wage Ratios by Gender, 2019, 2020

Category	2019		2020	
	Dec/NonDec Female	Wage Ratio Male	Dec/NonDec Female	Wage Ratio Male
<b>Sector</b>				
Agriculture	1.81	1.76	1.81	1.74
Industry	1.89	1.57	1.80	1.65
Construction	2.16	1.55	1.37	1.57
Trade	1.81	1.69	1.64	1.61
Services	2.18	1.97	1.87	1.70
<b>Marital_Status</b>				
Single	2.34	1.93	1.85	1.83
Married	1.98	1.70	1.77	1.64
Divorced	1.74	1.83	1.62	1.74
Widowed	2.36	2.55	1.12	1.33
<b>Public/Private</b>				
Private	2.04	1.68	1.87	1.66
Public	2.26	1.62	1.94	1.34
<b>Firm Size</b>				
1-10 Employees	2.01	1.59	1.81	1.55
11-19 "	1.64	1.43	1.38	1.45
20-49 "	1.36	1.49	1.11	1.27
50+ "	1.45	1.54	1.24	1.28
Unknown	2.60	1.17	1.60	1.59
<b>Register</b>				
UnregisteredEmp				
RegisteredEmp	1.25	1.39	1.13	1.32
<b>Employment Type</b>				
FullTime	2.28	1.81	2.17	1.76
PartTime				
<b>Education Level</b>				
NoEdu	1.64	1.34	1.59	1.31
PrimarySch	1.76	1.41	1.70	1.42
SecondarySch	2.00	1.63	1.81	1.62
HighSch	1.68	1.71	1.67	1.70
VocationalHighSch	1.77	1.63	1.73	1.63
University	1.22	1.45	1.09	1.34
MastersOrPhD	1.41	1.79	1.52	1.43
Total	2.06	1.84	1.77	1.75

**Source:** Author's own work.

### Pre-Pandemic Period Wage Dynamics

#### Overall Wage Ratios

In 2019, the overall decent-to-non-decent wage ratio for females was 2.06, indicating that women in decent employment earned over twice as much as their counterparts in non-decent roles. However, this ratio declined to 1.77 in 2020, reflecting a narrowing wage disparity during the pandemic. For males, the ratio decreased marginally from 1.84 in 2019 to 1.75 in 2020. These findings suggest that while wage disparities narrowed for both genders, the relative contraction was more pronounced for females.

#### Sectoral Analysis

In 2019, the highest decent-to-non-decent wage ratio for both genders was observed in the services sector, whereas the lowest was in construction for males and in agriculture and trade for females. In 2020, the services sector retained the highest wage ratio for females, but for males, agriculture emerged as the sector with the highest wage ratio. Construction continued to exhibit the lowest wage ratio for both genders during the pandemic, highlighting its persistently low relative wage equity.

#### Marital Status

Wage disparities also varied by marital status. Divorced females consistently showed the lowest decent-to-non-decent wage ratio across both years. Among males, the lowest ratio was observed for married men in 2019, but this shifted to widowed men in 2020, indicating shifting wage dynamics during the pandemic.

#### Public vs. Private Sector

The decent-to-non-decent wage ratio was consistently higher for females than for males in both the public and private sectors. This indicates that the wage gap between decent and non-decent employment was narrower for men, reflecting greater pay parity. Notably, this gap contracted for both genders during the pandemic, with a more pronounced improvement for females.

#### Firm Size

An inverse relationship between firm size and the decent-to-non-decent wage ratio was evident for both genders, but this trend was more pronounced among females, particularly in 2020. This finding implies that non-decent employees in larger firms tended to receive comparatively better wages, thereby reducing the wage gap as firm size increased.

#### Registered vs. Unregistered Employment

The decent-to-non-decent wage ratio was consistently higher for registered males than for registered females in both years. This suggests that registered employment offers relatively better wage equity for men. Furthermore, the gender wage gap appeared especially wide in unregistered employment, offsetting any narrowing of the gap in favor of males in other employment contexts.

#### Education Level

The relationship between education level and the decent-to-non-decent wage ratio exhibited marked differences by gender. For females, the relationship followed a reverse U-shaped pattern: the wage disparity increased up to the secondary school level before declining with higher education. For males, no distinct pattern emerged, suggesting a more complex interplay of factors influencing wage disparities.

The wage analysis highlights persistent disparities across dimensions such as sector, marital status, firm size, registration status, and education level. While the pandemic prompted a narrowing of some wage gaps—most notably for females—the findings underscore the nuanced and multifaceted nature of wage dynamics, particularly in the context of decent versus non-decent employment. These insights provide a critical foundation for targeted policy interventions to address wage inequities.

#### Post-Pandemic Period Wage Dynamics

Table 4 below represents the final descriptive table, which presents decent/non-decent weighted wage ratios across the specified categories. Notably, the overall decent/non-decent wage ratio has once again increased for both genders, surpassing even the pre-pandemic levels. This suggests that the decent/non-decent wage gap, which narrowed during the pandemic year, has since recovered, indicating a temporary disruption in the pandemic period.

In terms of sectoral distribution, the services sector has regained its position as the sector with the highest decent/non-decent wage ratio by the end of the recovery phase, mirroring the situation in the pre-pandemic year.

Regarding marital status, while "widowed" individuals represent the category with the largest decent/non-decent wage gap for females, "divorced" individuals exhibit the highest gap for males. Given that widows and divorced individuals tend to be older on average, it can be inferred that the decent/non-decent wage gap increases with age.

The relationship between firm size and the decent/non-decent wage ratio exhibits gender-specific patterns. For males, the gap, though not entirely linear, widens as firm size increases in the final year of the analysis. For females, however, the pattern follows a U-shape: the gap diminishes up to firms with 50-249 employees, and then begins to widen again in larger firms.

Finally, the relationship between education level and the decent/non-decent wage ratio in the post-pandemic period shows an inverse correlation for females: the wage gap between decent and non-decent employees decreases as education level rises. For males, however, no clear pattern emerges.

**Table 4.** Decent/Non-Decent Weighted Wage Ratios by Gender, 2021, 2023

Category	Dec/NonDec Wage Ratio 2021		Dec/NonDec Wage Ratio 2023	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
<b>Sector</b>				
Agriculture	1.94	1.77	1.69	1.75
Industry	1.84	1.72	1.92	1.75
Construction	2.27	1.52	1.67	1.48
Trade	1.75	1.73	1.73	1.66
Services	2.10	1.88	2.39	2.06
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Single	2.11	1.85	2.07	1.90
Married	1.94	1.80	2.21	1.82
Divorced	1.93	1.82	2.00	2.22
Widowed	2.18	2.17	2.64	1.97
<b>Public/Private</b>				
Public	1.28	1.23	1.38	1.28
Private	2.06	1.76	2.30	1.83
<b>Firm Size</b>				
1-9Emp.	1.92	1.60	2.21	1.63
10-19Emp.	1.72	1.63	1.66	1.56
20-49Emp.	1.23	1.35	1.25	1.41
50-249Emp.	1.28	1.44	1.19	1.34
250+Emp.	1.87	1.21	2.13	2.44
Unknown	2.36	1.14	0.95	1.81
<b>Register</b>				
Unreg. Emp				
Reg. Emp	1.37	1.53	1.42	1.79
<b>Employ.Type</b>				
FullTime	2.27	1.86	2.65	1.82
PartTime				
<b>Education</b>				
NoEdu	1.63	1.48	2.05	1.37
PrimarySch	1.80	1.50	2.10	1.54
SecondarySch	1.97	1.67	2.15	1.69
HighSch	1.82	1.64	1.94	1.64
VocationalHighSc	1.82	1.76	1.92	1.78
2YearsCollege	1.70	1.56	1.77	1.91
University	1.22	1.48	1.25	1.45
MastersOrPhD	1.63	1.63	1.48	1.52
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.98</b>	<b>1.91</b>	<b>2.16</b>	<b>1.90</b>

Source: Author's own work.

### 3.2. Methodology

We have chosen to apply a probit model due to the binary nature of employment status, where an individual is either employed or unemployed. Therefore, we estimate two separate probit models for decent and non-decent employment. The explanatory variables selected for both models include age, age squared, education, marital status, household size, and the number of employed individuals in the household, as these are considered the most significant determinants of employment probability. Additionally, we run separate regressions for females and males to examine potential gender differences in the likelihood of decent and non-decent employment. Thus, the probit models for decent and non-decent employment are specified as follows:

$$P(\text{DecentEmp})_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \text{Age}_i + \alpha_2 \text{AgeSquare}_i + \alpha_3 \text{HouseHoldSize}_i + \alpha_4 \text{NumEmp}_i + D_1^d \text{Education}_i + D_2^d \text{MaritalStatus}_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

$$P(\text{NonDecentEmp})_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Age}_i + \beta_2 \text{AgeSquare}_i + \beta_3 \text{HouseHoldSize}_i + \beta_4 \text{NumEmp}_i + D_1^n \text{Education}_i + D_2^n \text{MaritalStatus}_i + \mu_i \quad (2)$$

We anticipate a positive value for  $\alpha_1$ , as age serves as a proxy for experience, which typically enhances the likelihood of securing a decent job. In contrast, as one accumulates more experience in the labor market, the probability of obtaining a non-decent job decline. Consequently, we expect  $\beta_1$  to be negative. The relationship for the square of age, due to the adjustment mechanism, is expected to be the inverse ( $\alpha_2 < 0$  and  $\beta_2 > 0$ ).

Given that non-decent jobs are more prevalent among individuals with lower income and education levels, the coefficient for household size is expected to be positive for the non-decent job group. Larger household sizes, driven by insufficient family income, compel individuals to seek employment. Conversely, for the decent job group, the relationship is reversed. In particular, for women, childcare responsibilities tend to hinder the job search process, leading to the expectation that  $\alpha_3 < 0$  and  $\beta_3 > 0$ , with a more pronounced effect in the regression for women.

Regarding the number of employed individuals in the household (NumEmp), we expect a positive correlation for both decent and non-decent job groups. In households where non-decent jobs predominate, the insufficiency of income pressures individuals to seek employment. For households where decent jobs are more common, the employment of one spouse often encourages the other to pursue work. Additionally, in middle-class families with relatively high consumption levels, it is typically necessary for both partners to be employed to meet financial needs, further reinforcing this positive relationship.

Education, as a key determinant, has a positive impact on the search for decent jobs. As educational attainment increases, the likelihood of finding a non-decent job diminishes, so we expect the education dummies for the non-decent group to be negative.

Finally, considering marital status, we expect a negative coefficient for married women in the decent job category, as childcare responsibilities typically remove them from the job market. For the non-decent group, however, there are two opposing forces. On one hand, childcare and domestic duties tend to discourage employment, but on the other, low family income may drive married women to seek at least part-time work, leading to a positive effect. Therefore, the overall impact depends on which factor prevails. As a result, there is no definitive expectation for the marital status coefficient for married women in the non-decent group. In contrast, for men, the coefficient is expected to be positive in both the decent and non-decent job categories.

#### 4. Results

Table 5, Table 6, Table 7 and Table 8 present the probit regression results for "decent" and "non-decent" groups disaggregated by gender. We provide an analysis over different timeframes: pre-pandemic (2019), pandemic (2020), and post-pandemic (2021 and 2023). The following analysis evaluates key features and changes across these periods, emphasizing trends in the effects of age, education, marital status, and household size.

##### **Pre-Pandemic Period (2019)**

Before the pandemic, the results show some distinct patterns:

**Age and Age Square:** Age has a positive and significant effect on decent employment for both males and females, though the effect diminishes at higher ages, as indicated by the negative coefficients of the age square variable.

**Education:** Educational attainment has a strong and significant impact on the likelihood of being in decent employment. For males and females, higher education levels (e.g., university and master's/Ph.D.) consistently show stronger positive effects. The coefficients for high school and university are especially notable for females in decent groups, indicating a higher relative advantage of education for this demographic.

**Table 5.** Probit Regressions for Decent and Non-Decent Groups, 2019

	Year 2019 (pre-pandemic)			
	Male Decent	Female Decent	Male NonDec	Female NonDec
<b>Age</b>	.204*** (0)	.192*** (0)	-.173*** (0)	-.137*** (0)
<b>Age Square</b>	-.003*** (0)	-.002*** (0)	.002*** (0)	.002*** (0)
<b>Education</b>				
PrimarySch	.267*** (.002)	.426*** (.002)	-.254*** (.002)	-.409*** (.002)
SecondarySch	.543*** (.002)	.821*** (.002)	-.465*** (.002)	-.69*** (.002)
HighSch	.675*** (.002)	1.176*** (.002)	-.588*** (.002)	-1.141*** (.002)
VocationalHighSch	.87*** (.002)	1.326*** (.002)	-.784*** (.002)	-1.372*** (.002)
University	1.02*** (.002)	1.573*** (.002)	-1.024*** (.002)	-1.649*** (.002)
MastersOrPhD	1.33*** (.003)	1.951*** (.003)	-1.315*** (.003)	-1.851*** (.004)
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Married	.501*** (.001)	-.145*** (.001)	.026*** (.001)	.417*** (.002)
Divorced	.096*** (.002)	.138*** (.002)	.149*** (.002)	.194*** (.003)
Widowed	.513*** (.005)	-.161*** (.004)	0 (.005)	.601*** (.004)
<b>Household Size</b>	-.12*** (0)	-.174*** (0)	-.013*** (0)	-.001*** (0)
<b>NumEmp</b>	.195*** (0)	.294*** (0)	.299*** (0)	.366*** (.001)
<b>_cons</b>	-3.87*** (.004)	-4.297*** (.006)	2.161*** (.004)	1.688*** (.006)
Observations	117123	60465	117123	60465
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.192	.224	.226	.325

Source: Author's own work.

Marital Status: Marriage has a positive effect on decent employment for males, while it shows a negative effect for females, reflecting potential structural differences in gender roles or employment discrimination. Divorce and widowhood have weaker or less consistent effects.

Household Size and Employment: The number of employed household members (NumEmp) is positively associated with being in a decent group, suggesting that higher household employment correlates with individual decent employment.

**Table 6.** Probit Regressions for Decent and Non-Decent Groups, 2020

	Year 2020 (pandemic)			
	Male Decent	Female Decent	Male NonDec	Female NonDec
<b>Age</b>	.193*** (0)	.178*** (0)	-.165*** (0)	-.119*** (0)
<b>Age Square</b>	-.003*** (0)	-.002*** (0)	.002*** (0)	.002*** (0)
<b>Education</b>				
PrimarySch	.251*** (.002)	.518*** (.002)	-.218*** (.002)	-.524*** (.002)
SecondarySch	.496*** (.002)	.946*** (.002)	-.4*** (.002)	-.849*** (.002)
HighSch	.626*** (.002)	1.272*** (.003)	-.54*** (.002)	-1.264*** (.002)
VocationalHighSch	.835*** (.002)	1.398*** (.003)	-.741*** (.002)	-1.44*** (.003)
University	.908*** (.002)	1.56*** (.002)	-.859*** (.002)	-1.599*** (.002)
MastersOrPhD	1.175*** (.003)	1.873*** (.003)	-1.109*** (.003)	-1.753*** (.003)
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Married	.479*** (.001)	-.1*** (.001)	.051*** (.001)	.37*** (.002)
Divorced	.085*** (.002)	.034*** (.002)	.162*** (.002)	.208*** (.003)
Widowed	.439*** (.005)	-.196*** (.004)	.084*** (.005)	.587*** (.004)
<b>Household Size</b>				
	-.116*** (0)	-.166*** (0)	-.011*** (0)	.007*** (0)
<b>NumEmp</b>	.218*** (0)	.257*** (0)	.293*** (0)	.371*** (.001)
<b>_cons</b>	-3.656*** (.004)	-4.036*** (.006)	1.938*** (.004)	1.437*** (.006)
Observations	141247	68963	141247	68963
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.171	.199	.206	.304

Source: Author's own work.

### Pandemic Period (2020)

The pandemic introduces shifts in the labor market as reflected in 2020 results:

**Age and Age Square:** The significance of age remains, though the coefficients slightly decline, reflecting potential disruptions in career progression or job availability.

**Education:** The role of education becomes more pronounced during the pandemic, particularly for females. University-level education has the highest coefficients for decent employment across all groups, suggesting that higher education provided resilience against labor market shocks.

**Marital Status:** The negative effect of marriage on females in decent groups becomes slightly less pronounced compared to 2019, indicating some reduction in gender disparity due to changing household or societal roles during the pandemic. For males, marriage continues to have a strong positive effect.



Household Size: The importance of NumEmp increases for all groups, underscoring the pandemic-induced economic vulnerability and reliance on collective household employment.

**Table 7.** Probit Regressions for Decent and Non-Decent Groups, 2021

	Year 2021 (post-pandemic)			
	Male Decent	Female Decent	Male NonDec	Female NonDec
<b>Age</b>	.174*** (0)	.18*** (0)	-.152*** (0)	-.12*** (0)
<b>Age Square</b>	-.002*** (0)	-.002*** (0)	.002*** (0)	.002*** (0)
<b>Education</b>				
PrimarySch	.36*** (.002)	.48*** (.002)	-.314*** (.002)	-.577*** (.002)
SecondarySch	.552*** (.002)	.918*** (.002)	-.462*** (.002)	-.857*** (.002)
HighSch	.744*** (.002)	1.257*** (.002)	-.665*** (.002)	-1.304*** (.002)
VocationalHighSch	.924*** (.002)	1.401*** (.003)	-.846*** (.002)	-1.49*** (.003)
2YearsCollege	1.012*** (.002)	1.486*** (.003)	-1.018*** (.002)	-1.74*** (.003)
University	.996*** (.002)	1.603*** (.002)	-.995*** (.002)	-1.679*** (.002)
MastersOrPhD	1.33*** (.003)	1.951*** (.003)	-1.315*** (.003)	-1.851*** (.004)
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Married	.511*** (.001)	-.137*** (.001)	.006*** (.001)	.342*** (.002)
Divorced	.056*** (.002)	.018*** (.002)	.175*** (.002)	.175*** (.003)
Widowed	.361*** (.005)	-.18*** (.004)	.086*** (.004)	.489*** (.004)
<b>Household Size</b>	-.12*** (0)	-.169*** (0)	.007*** (0)	.014*** (0)
<b>NumEmp</b>	.208*** (0)	.276*** (0)	.255*** (0)	.336*** (.001)
<b>_cons</b>	-3.308*** (.004)	-4.076*** (.006)	1.766*** (.004)	1.535*** (.006)
Observations	153354	77109	153354	77109
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.168	.203	.199	.305

**Source:** Author's own work.

**Table 8.** Probit Regressions for Decent and Non-Decent Groups, 2023

	Year 2023			
	Male Decent	Female Decent	Male NonDec	Female NonDec
<b>Age</b>	.15***	.144***	-.131***	-.102***
	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
<b>Age Square</b>	-.002***	-.002***	.002***	.001***
	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
<b>Education</b>				
PrimarySch	.399***	.551***	-.404***	-.627***
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
SecondarySch	.553***	.913***	-.492***	-.842***
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
HighSch	.785***	1.251***	-.773***	-1.337***
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
VocationalHighSch	.976***	1.383***	-.954***	-1.465***
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
2YearsCollege	1.064***	1.486***	-1.098***	-1.76***
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
University	1.05***	1.587***	-1.065***	-1.602***
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
MastersOrPhD	1.308***	1.811***	-1.301***	-1.697***
	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Married	.438***	-.16***	-.056***	.306***
	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)
Divorced	.12***	.085***	.078***	.078***
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Widowed	.28***	-.16***	.08***	.414***
	(.004)	(.003)	(.004)	(.003)
<b>Household Size</b>				
	-.109***	-.174***	.018***	.037***
	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
<b>NumEmp</b>	.192***	.316***	.172***	.212***
	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
<b>_cons</b>	-2.775***	-3.431***	1.545***	1.395***
	(.004)	(.005)	(.004)	(.005)
Observations	149117	81465	149117	81465
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.156	.189	.18	.261

Source: Author's own work.

### Post-Pandemic Period (2021 and 2023)

The post-pandemic period shows a recovery trend, with some enduring structural changes:

**Age and Age Square:** The age effects remain largely stable, with slight reductions in magnitude compared to pre-pandemic levels. This stability suggests that age-related advantages have not substantially shifted during the recovery period.

**Education:** Educational attainment continues to play a dominant role, but the gap between decent and non-decent groups widens. Notably, in 2023, vocational education shows a strong positive effect for males, indicating a growing demand for specialized skills. For females, high school and university education maintain the highest impacts on decent employment.

**Marital Status:** Gendered patterns persist, with marriage remaining advantageous for males but having a neutral or slightly negative effect for females. The effects of divorce and widowhood become less pronounced in 2023, suggesting greater labor market inclusivity or adaptability.

**Household Size:** The role of household employment (NumEmp) continues to grow, particularly for non-decent groups, reflecting ongoing economic adjustments and reliance on household-level resilience strategies.

#### **Cross-Period Comparison**

**Resilience of Education:** Across all periods, higher education consistently enhances the likelihood of decent employment. The pandemic amplified this effect, particularly for females, highlighting education as a critical buffer against economic shocks.

**Gender Disparities:** Gender-based differences in the impact of marital status and education persist across periods. The pandemic slightly reduced these disparities, but they remain significant in the recovery phase.

**Household Dynamics:** The increasing importance of NumEmp underscores shifting economic reliance on collective household efforts during and after the pandemic.

Findings suggest that while some structural factors like education and household dynamics played a stabilizing role during the pandemic, others, such as gender disparities and age effects, exhibited resilience or slight shifts. Policymakers should consider these patterns in designing interventions to promote equitable and resilient labor markets. Investing in education, addressing gender-specific employment barriers, and supporting multi-earner households may mitigate future economic shocks and foster inclusive recovery.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study provides a comprehensive examination of the concept of decent work within the Turkish labor market, emphasizing its gendered dimensions and the shifts induced by Covid-19 pandemic. By leveraging detailed microdata from the Household Labor Force Surveys spanning 2019 to 2023, the research offers a nuanced analysis of the disparities in employment types, wages, and conditions across gender, education levels, marital status, and sectors.

The findings highlight persistent gender disparities in access to decent work, with women disproportionately represented in non-decent employment. This overrepresentation is particularly notable in the services and agricultural sectors and among married or divorced women, suggesting the pervasive influence of societal norms and structural barriers. The U-shaped relationship between educational attainment and non-decent employment among women further underscores the complexity of these dynamics, where higher education paradoxically coincides with increased non-decent employment in some contexts.

As defined by the ILO, the concept of decent work encapsulates the aspirations individuals have in their working lives. It encompasses opportunities for employment that are both productive and provide equitable remuneration, along with workplace security and comprehensive social protection for all. Furthermore, it ensures enhanced prospects for personal growth and social integration, as well as the freedom for individuals to voice their concerns, organize, and engage in decisions that impact their lives. Central to this concept is the principle of equality, guaranteeing equal opportunities and treatment for both women and men.

However, we are constrained by the limitations of the survey's questionnaire. Regrettably, the data does not contain questions that directly assess the concepts outlined in the definition. Regarding income, its inclusion in the regression analysis necessitates the establishment of a threshold, which would inevitably involve a subjective judgment. Consequently, we limit our analysis to the most fundamental and readily available variables in the survey for identifying 'decent work'.

Similar to the existing studies in the literature, results of the study reveal that women's labor market participation are lower compared to men. Furthermore, their concentration in lower-status jobs, and their involvement in temporary and precarious employment make women more disadvantaged than men in the Turkish labor market. Overall, our findings highlight persistent gender disparities in access to decent work, with women disproportionately represented in non-decent employment. As mentioned in the previous studies in the literature, Covid-19 crisis has underscored the global challenges of accessing decent work. Our results show that Türkiye is no exception. We find that Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, disproportionately impacting women's employment due to their concentration in sectors most affected by economic disruptions and their dual burden of unpaid caregiving responsibilities. However, the analysis reveals a gradual recovery in the post-pandemic period, with some narrowing of gender disparities in certain domains. Nonetheless, the resilience of structural inequalities, particularly in wages and job security, underscores the need for sustained policy interventions.

This research contributes to the literature by providing the first gender-disaggregated, longitudinal analysis of decent work in Türkiye using administrative microdata. The findings underscore the importance of integrating gender-sensitive approaches into labor market policies to enhance equity and inclusion. Efforts to promote decent work should address both systemic barriers and emergent challenges, such as those posed by global crises like Covid-19 pandemic.

Future policies should focus on expanding access to formal employment, enhancing social protections, and fostering educational and professional pathways that lead to sustainable, dignified employment opportunities for all genders. Addressing these priorities is essential not only for advancing gender equality but also for achieving broader socio-economic development in Türkiye. By bridging the decent work deficit, Türkiye can ensure a more inclusive and resilient labor market.

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