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# **FEMALE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN URBANIZATION PROCESS: THE CASE OF TURKEY**

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## **Abstract**

Urbanization -as a worldwide phenomenon- has increased its pace especially in the twentieth century in all over the World. Turkey is no exception of this process. In Turkey, urbanization has been accelerated since 1950 and it still carries on by increasing its speed. While only 25% of the population had lived in cities in 1927, nowadays this portion of the population has reached to approximately 70.0 %.

Like in many developing countries, women in rural labor markets of Turkey mostly work as unpaid family workers in agriculture and in some non-market activities such as home production and voluntary jobs. It is observed that from 1950's to today women's labor force participation rates (LFPRs) in urban areas have been diminished dramatically. Besides other factors that reduces women's LFP in urban areas, ongoing migration from rural to urban areas seems to play the dominant role in this result. It appears that as a result of migration rural female workers are left without any jobs in the cities. Several factors can be taken into account to explain this transformation such as; cultural values against women's participation in market work, women's lack of education and marketable skills, unfavorable labor market conditions and increases in enrollment rates in all levels of schooling. In this paper, we have explained the characteristics, causes and dimensions of female labor force participation in urbanization process of Turkey.

**Keywords:** Urbanization, female labor force participation in Turkey, unemployment, gender discrimination

## **INTRODUCTION**

Urbanization, as a worldwide phenomenon, has increased in pace especially in the twentieth century. In 1950, 29.1 percent of the world's population lived in cities. This proportion has risen to 39.1% in 1980, 48.6% in 2005 and will continue to grow to 69.6% in 2050 reaching over 6 billion people by 2050 (UN, 2007). Turkey is no exception of this process. In Turkey urbanization has been accelerated since 1950 and it still carries on by increasing its speed. While only 25% of the population had lived in cities in 1927, presently this portion of the population has reached approximately 70.0 %.

In most developing countries urbanization is not a pre-planned and controlled phenomenon. Instead, usually some unforeseen economic or social event instigates internal migration. Even when planned, in some cases measures that were taken become inadequate due to over accelerated migration. Therefore it is inevitable to have some problems as a result of migration such as squatting (slum areas), increased crime rates, infrastructure problems etc.

In this study we will investigate one of the problems of urbanization in Turkey, namely insufficient labor force participation of urban women. In the first part of this paper we will briefly review urbanization in Turkey. In the second part, female work forces' situation in Turkish labor markets will be analyzed by using some statistical indicators. Finally, in the third part we will try to figure out the causes that make women labor invisible after migration.

## **A QUICK GLANCE AT URBANIZATION IN TURKEY**

### **Internal Migration and Urbanization From 1920's to 1980's**

Factors effecting migration from rural to urban areas can be classified under three categories. These are; push factors, pull factors and transmittive factors. Factors such as deteriorating conditions in the agricultural sector represent *push factors*, while opportunities offered by cities; such as, education, health care, employment and cultural opportunities correspond to *pull factors*. Development in facilities like transportation and communication are labeled as *transmittive factors*.

Although studies about internal migration in Turkey emphasize the 1950s as the starting point of acceleration, the phenomenon itself began during the 1930's. At that time, Turkey began to implement rapid industrialization policies in order stimulate economic growth and began establishing State Owned Enterprises (SOE). The number of SOEs

increased from 31 in 1932 to 111 in 1939 (Karluk, 2007: 218). By their role in increasing employment prospects in the cities, SOEs can be regarded as major pull factors for internal migration.

However, there is no doubt that migration from rural to urban areas had accelerated by the 1950s. As can be seen from the table below before 1950 urban population increased at a relatively slow pace, while it increased dramatically after 1950, reaching an annual growth rate of 5.56% in the period between 1950-1955. Two main factors that affecting migration in this period were Marshall aid and rapid industrialization.

**Table 2: The annual growth rate of total and urban population in Turkey (1927–2050)**

Periods	Total Annual Growth Rate(%)	Urban Annual Growth Rate(%)	Periods	Total Annual Growth Rate(%)	Urban Annual Growth Rate(%)
1927 – 1935	2.11	1.75	1995 – 2000	1.66	2.48
1935 – 1940	1.96	2.67	2000 – 2005	1.36	2.13
1940 – 1945	1.10	1.51	2005 – 2010	1.26	1.95
1945 – 1950	2.17	2.25	2010 – 2015	1.10	1.73
1950 – 1955	2.77	5.56	2015 – 2020	0.94	1.51
1955 – 1960	2.85	4.92	2020 – 2025	0.79	1.31
1960 – 1965	2.46	3.97	2025 – 2030	0.64	1.11
1965 – 1970	2.52	4.73	2030 – 2035	0.52	0.95
1970 – 1975	2.50	4.17	2035 – 2040	0.40	0.80
1975 – 1980	2.06	3.05	2040 – 2045	0.28	0.65
1980 – 1985	2.48	6.26	2045 – 2050	0.16	0.50
1985 – 1990	2.17	4.31			
1990 – 1995	1.80	2.76			

**Sources:** For the period of 1927-1990 Işık, 2005, p.60 / For the period of 1990–2050 World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision Population Database (<http://esa.un.org/unup/p2k0data.asp>) /Data after 2005 are predictions

Turkey was one of the beneficiaries of the Marshall aid, a support that was provided by the US to various European countries in the post-WW2 period, during the Truman administration. Migration to western areas of Turkey as a mass movement began as a result of the Marshall Plan. One of the stipulations of Marshall aid was modernization of Turkish agriculture which up to that time was quite rudimentary. The aid program caused an immense

increase in mechanization of agriculture. For example, the number of tractors in Turkey was 1756 in 1948, by 1960 it had risen to 42,136 (Karluk, 2007: 185). Several surveys indicate that mechanization of agriculture caused unemployment among a certain segment of the rural population, forcing them to leave the land. Increase in the number of tractors is believed to be responsible for at least 25% of the urban population between 1950-70. Extreme fragmentation of agricultural land, with 70% of farmers having four or more parcels of land and prevalence of small scale farming contributed to urbanization (Keleş 1972: 11).

Another consequence of the Marshall aid that accelerated migration is related to transportation. Until 1950 Turkey's transportation infrastructure was largely based on rail transport. During the preliminary arrangements to Marshall Aid Vice Director of Federal Bureau of Public Roads, Hilt visited Turkey and prepared a report in 1947 suggesting improvements to the highway system. His suggestions were accepted by Turkish Ministry of Transportation in February 1948. Mr. Hilt's suggestion was seemingly based on the premise of the necessity to distribute the increased agricultural production to nationwide. But, it is generally accepted that the unspoken intention of Mr. Hilt's report was to provide a new and big market to the products of American automotive industry. As a matter of fact the highway systems of Turkey developed using machinery, asphalt and technical assistance all by provided by the US (Yüksek, ? : 5,7).

Improvements in the transportation infrastructure have played an important transmissive role in increasing the mobility of people and the distribution of goods and services, thus fostering the specialization and division of labor necessary for urbanization (Keleş, 1972: 12). The rapid pace of industrialization in the 1950's also acted as a pull factor in migration. Since 1950 the percentage of people working in non-agricultural sectors has increased immensely. However job opportunities in large cities have not increased at the same pace as urbanization. This explains why the great majority of the unemployed live in urban places.

### **Internal Migration and Urbanization From 1980's to Today**

The second period of rapid urbanization in Turkey began in the 1980's and still continues. This episode of rapid migration from rural to urban areas has two main reasons. The first is changes in agricultural policies by the government and the second is the security issues arising from separatist terrorism in the South Eastern and Eastern parts of the country.

The agriculture sector in Turkey enjoyed generous levels of subsidies and support from the beginning of the republic (1923) until the 1980's. Often the state would purchase agricultural products at higher than world market prices providing additional profits to producers. With the liberalization policies of the Özal era beginning in the early 1980's governments began withdrawing these generous supports. From 1980's onwards government prioritized the interests of consumers above producers in their policies regarding agriculture. However this change in agricultural policies and reduction in supports increased poverty in rural areas and pushed agricultural policies to urban areas.

Another push factor that has been effective especially after 1985 is the increased violence and terrorism in the Eastern and south Eastern parts of the country. The deterioration in security has caused some of the rural populations of these areas to migrate to cities in the western part of the country like İstanbul, Ankara, Kocaeli, İzmir, while others have preferred cities in their regions such as Diyarbakır and Van. The table below exhibits this transfer of population from rural to urban areas.

**Table 2: The proportion and growth of urban-rural population in Turkey (1927–2050)**

Years	Urban Population (thousands)	Percentage Urban (%)	Rural Population (thousands)	Percentage Rural (%)
1927	3.306	24.2	10.342	75.2
1935	3.802	23.5	12.355	76.5
1940	4.346	24.4	13.475	75.6
1945	4.687	24.9	14.103	75.1
1950	5.244	25.0	15.703	75.0
1955	6.927	28.8	17.137	71.2
1960	8.860	31.9	18.895	68.1
1965	10.806	34.4	20.585	65.6
1970	13.691	38.5	21.914	61.5
1975	16.869	41.8	23.478	58.2
1980	19.645	43.9	25.091	56.1
1985	26.866	53.0	23.799	47.0
1990	33.949	59.2	23.395	40.8
1995	38.974	62.1	23.763	37.9
2000	44.006	65.0	23.797	35.0
2005	43.097	67.3	23.872	32.7
2010	54.119	69.6	23.584	30.4
2020	63.658	74.0	22.412	26.0
2030	71.874	77.7	20.594	23.0
2040	78.461	81.1	18.326	18.9
2050	83.120	84.0	15.826	16.0

**Sources:** For the period of 1927–2000 Işık, 2005, p.60 / For the period of 2005-2050 World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision Population Database (<http://esa.un.org/unup/p2k0data.asp>) / Data after2005 are predictions

Table 2 illustrates the urbanization process that we have been summarizing from the beginning of this paper. While urban population only accounted for 24.2% of total population at the beginning of the republic, since 1980 urban population have become the larger part in total population. Through this table we can also see that urban population have growth have accelerated after the 1950s, as previously mentioned. The table exhibits that while urban population increased only 59% between 1927 and 1950, it increased 275% between 1950 and 1980.

## **WOMEN IN TURKISH LABOR MARKETS**

This part of the paper will briefly analyze women’s position in Turkish labor markets from various perspectives. Although it is possible to use lots of data to fully demonstrate the role of women in Turkish labor markets, doing so probably will extend the size of this paper. Therefore we prefer to submit a few important tables containing key data. Other information about women labor force in Turkey will be presented in brief statements.

**Table 3. Labor Force Participation Rates by Gender (1988–2009)**

<b>Years</b>	<b>LFPR in General (%)</b>	<b>LFPR for Men (%)</b>	<b>LFPR for Women (%)</b>
1988	57.5	81.2	34.3
1989	58.1	80.6	36.1
1990	56.6	79.7	34.1
1991	57.0	80.2	34.1
1992	56.0	79.6	32.7
1993	52.1	78.0	26.8
1994	54.6	78.5	31.3
1995	54.1	77.8	30.9
1996	53.7	77.3	30.6
1997	52.6	76.7	28.8
1998	52.8	76.7	29.3
1999	52.7	75.8	30.0
2000	49.9	73.7	26.6
2001	49.8	72.9	27.1
2002	49.6	71.6	27.9
2003	48.3	70.4	26.6
2004	48.7	72.3	25.4
2005	48.3	72.2	24.8
2006	48.0	71.5	24.9
2007	47.8	71.3	24.8
2008	46.9	70.1	24.5
2009	45.9	69.1	23.5

**Source:** TURKSTAT

The table above reveals some striking patterns of labor force participation rates. The first thing that draws attention is the low levels and diminishing nature of labor force participation rates. According to the Eurostat statistics, average LFPR for EU-27 countries in

2006 was 63% for women and 77.6% for men. In regards to women's LFPRs in the EU Denmark has the highest rate (77%), while Malta has the lowest one (38.3%). In comparison with these figures Turkey is clearly in an inferior situation. The situation is the same when we compare Turkish labor market data with OECD statistics. OECD Employment Report of 2006 shows that Turkey has the lowest rank when it comes to women's labor force participation. The table above also shows that from 1988 to present women's LFPRs decreased more rapidly than men's LFPRs. In order to have a better idea about women's labor force participation we have to make comparisons between rural and urban areas. Table 4 provides this information for some selected years.

**Table 4. Women's LFPRs by Geographical Location in Selected Years (%)**

<b>Years</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Urban</b>
1988	50.7	17.7
1995	49.3	16.8
2000	40.2	17.2
2001	41.7	17.4
2002	41.4	19.1
2003	39.0	18.5
2004	36.7	18.3
2004	33.7	19.3
2006	33.0	19.9

**Source:** TURKSTAT

Table 4 can be considered as a clear indication of changing composition of the labor force, away from agricultural to non-agricultural activities. Reduction in the women's LFPRs from 50.7% in 1988 to 33.0% in 2006 is a clear sign of ongoing migration. However during the same period urban LFPRs of women almost kept its level unchanged. This means that women who are largely unpaid family workers in rural labor markets drop out of the labor force when they migrate into urban areas. In other words women who had migrated to cities became invisible. In the next part of this paper we will investigate the possible reasons of newcomer women's disappearance in urban labor markets.



The next table exhibits the sectoral distribution of employment by gender. Table 5 also confirms the above ideas about the effects of migration in labor markets.

**Table 5. Sectoral Distribution of Women’s Employment, 15+Age**

Sectors	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Agriculture	60.5	63.3	60.0	58.5	57.2	51.6	48.5
Industry	12.6	11.8	13.3	12.9	13.6	14.6	14.4
Services	26.9	24.9	26.6	28.6	29.2	33.8	37.1

**Source:** TURKSTAT

Table 5 shows that agriculture’s share in women’s employment dropped drastically due to migration. While from 2000 to 2006 women’s employment share in industry increased slightly, the share of services sector increased just over 10 points. The data presented in the above table implies that women who migrated from rural to urban areas were either employed in services industry or dropped out of the labor force.

Some of the other important statements that can be highlighted about women labor force in Turkey are as follows:

- While the most common form of employment for Turkish woman was becoming that of unpaid family worker (UFW) in 2000 (52.1%), by 2006 wage employment had risen to the first rank (41.0%) whereas being UFW has dropped to second place (39.0%).
- Unpaid family working is a natural result of small agricultural units. It is known that small farms rely on unpaid labor of female family members and in some cases, the network of female kin and neighbors recruited for work parties in peak periods through reciprocal non-monetized exchanges. By relying on family labor, small farms minimize labor costs, recruit labor without competing for wage workers and are able to coexist with large landowners who use wage workers. It is clear that if paid labor were used, such farms would not be economically viable (Berik and Bilginsoy, 2000: 21). Reduction in the share of UFW’s share from 52.1% to 39.0% within seven years can be seen as a confirmation of continuing migration.
- When we look at women’s labor force participation by educational level what we see is that there is co linearity between the two. In 2006 LFPR was 16.2% for illiterate women,

21.8% for women with less than high school education, 31.4% for high school graduates and 69.8% for university graduates. That is, participation increases with education.

- As for the unemployment in Turkey, women rank first in disadvantaged groups. In urban areas of Turkey women's unemployment rate is higher than both the average rate and men's rate. For example, by 2008 women's unemployment rate in urban areas was 16.1%, while general unemployment rate was 13.0% and men's unemployment rate was 12.1%.
- Unregistered employment is a wide spread problem in the Turkish economy. In 2006 almost half of the total employment (48.5%) was unregistered. Unregistered jobs offer no social insurance to workers. Indeed this is not the whole story. Unregistered jobs have other unwanted features such as low wages, low job security and inferior working conditions. It seems that women have a clear disadvantage in this regard. For the same year women's unregistered employment ratio (66.0%) was 20 points higher than that of men's. Unregistered employment is especially a widespread phenomenon in the services sector and agriculture where production units are usually small and jobs require little qualification. Because small firms have limited operational capital, they are financially weak and therefore over-sensitive about costs. These are also the sectors where the majority of working women are employed.

## **REASONS THAT MAKE WOMEN LABOR “INVISIBLE” AFTER MIGRATION**

### **Child Care Duties of Women**

Maternity is one of the main factors that influence female participation rates. The idea that young children may suffer if their mother works is relatively wide spread in all countries and has an impact on the labor force participation of women of a child bearing age (OECD, 2003: 131). Turkey is no exception. One of the most striking features of female employment in the urban parts of Turkey is the low participation rate of married women. The main cause of this outcome is that traditionally women are judged as responsible of caring the children and the dependents in the family.

Almost all over the world there is a value system which continues to justify the sex-typing of roles across the whole range of human activities. Some roles such as housework,

cares for other family members (especially the elderly and the children), shopping and house administration work have been accepted as women's duties. From this aspect, the situation of women who have paid work outside the home is not very different from that of women who stay at home. Working women may get some help from their husbands but the chores still are not divided equally between wives and husbands. In addition, many working women still regard housework as a moral necessity to which they must submit. Therefore working women have to carry dual load and should be considered as "*heavy workers*" (Doğramacı, 2000: 170).

It has been found in a study in Italy that during weekdays women's unpaid work ranges from a minimum of 4.42 hours per day in double income households without children to a maximum of 8.69 hours per day in single income households with children. It should be noted that for employed women with children total working time is, on average, eleven hours per day (Addabbo, 2003: 32). These results about the total working time of employed women are valid for Turkey as well. As indicated by a TURKSTAT's research, the time that working men spend for household chores is only 43 minutes, while it is 4 hours and 3 minutes for working women. It is 1 hour and 12 minutes for non-working men while it is 5 hours and 43 minutes for women who do not work for pay. These results show that in many countries it is women who are considered as the main respondents of home duties (TUIK, 2007).

The dual load of working women obviously reduces their quality of life and in some cases induces them exit the labor force voluntarily. It has been found in a study about the working women in state enterprises that most of the working women expressed their unhappiness of carrying a dual load and said that they indeed do not want to work for pay because of this (Özbay, 1990: 13). A survey on 12000 women in Istanbul who are not in the labor force demonstrated similar results. According to this study 23.3% percent of these housewives stated that they had chosen to not take part in the labor force voluntarily because of the heavy burdens of working for pay (KSSGM, 1999: 136). In spite of all these difficulties, women who choose to be in the labor force have to make arrangements for their children and the elderly whose care they are responsible for.

In most developing countries child care and elderly care services have always been limited. Turkey is one of those countries. In Turkey child care institutions are insufficient in numbers as well as not being affordable, in terms of the cost. Besides the workplace nurseries, there are 1.500 crèches which give care services to 25.000 children between ages 0 and 3 (KREŞLER, 2009: 1). The resources that are allocated to child care services from the

government budget are limited. Therefore, compared to many other countries, in Turkey the proportion of the population that use institutional childcare services is quite small. While early childhood education ratio is 16% in Turkey, it is 78% in North American and West European countries, 57% in the Eastern European countries and the world average is 37%. Besides this, there is an unbalanced distribution of these institutions throughout Turkey. 43% of over 1.500 child care facilities present are located in three big cities (Ankara, İstanbul and İzmir) while only 29 crèches are located in the 20 lowest ranking cities in terms of GDP (BUSPF, 2009: 5-7, 19-21).

It is known that presence and affordability of child care services are important determinants of female labor force participation. Statistics show that women's participation rates are almost 60% in the EU-15 countries, which have highly developed child care systems while it is around 20% in Turkey. Through this lens we can see the link between child care facilities and women's labor force participation.

Migration from rural to urban areas often brings forth child care problems. Rural female workers, who usually work as unpaid family workers, have more flexibility in terms of care responsibilities than urban female workers. After migration women who want to work for pay have to face this question: where can I leave my child while I'm working? Because there are limited child care institutions with affordable costs, in most cases women workers must find alternative answers to this question. There are several studies about these alternatives.

In a research performed in Şanlıurfa, which is a medium sized city located in the southeastern part of the country, it was found that only 3.3% of working mothers use child care institutions where as 35% of them leave their children to their mothers-in-law and 30% of them leave their children to their own mothers while they are work (Çolak and Kılıç, 2001: 97). Similar results have been found in another study which analyzed the working intention of women who were out of labor force in İstanbul. According to this study 25.8% of non-working women expressed as their reason for not being in the labor force as the presence of children who need close parental care (KSSGM, 1999: 137). Another country-wide study confirms the results of previously mentioned studies. According to this study 34% of working women in Turkey care for their children by themselves while 29.9% use their mothers or mother in laws and %7.4 uses the oldest daughters to care their children (KSSGM, 2008: 13).

What alternatives women choose for childcare depends on their education and income levels. According to an empirical study performed in Ankara, the model behavior among

university graduates was to put their children in childcare centers or to employ a caretaker. Among high school graduates the most popular solution was adult female relatives; mostly grandmothers took care of children while their mothers were working. Among primary school graduates the prevalent solution was to entrust the care of the children to the eldest female child at home (Özbay, 1994: 12).

### **Gender differences in earnings**

Obviously employing professional childcare services is a matter of income which is often correlated with the level of education. According to the various resources women in Turkey earn 20-50% less than men. Indeed, “*equal pay for equal work*” principle has been legally in effect since 1950, in practice, however, it has been possible to pay women less than men by finding some pretexts such as low levels of seniority, experience or qualification (Zeytinoğlu, 1998: 189) (İçli et.al., 1999: 16).

In fact, it is known that even in countries with high levels of women participation women’s earnings are generally lower than that of men’s. The main cause for this is “*gender differences in human capital*”. In terms of the overall educational human capital of men and women, it appears that men held a clear advantage. Moreover gender differences in work experiences are also responsible for wage differentials. As previously mentioned, historically women have been far less likely to be in the paid work force. Thus, because women’s labor force participation rates were substantially lower than men’s, it follows as a matter of arithmetic that women must on average have accumulated fewer years of work experience than men (Hoffmand and Averett, 2004: 324). For this reason women’s wages are on the average 77% of men’s wage in developed countries whereas they are 73% of men’s wage in developing countries.

According to a study that is based on the results of 2002 Household Budget Survey of TURKSTAT the average yearly income of women is 47% lower than that of men’s and 85% of this differential comes from gender discrimination. Also, the World Bank’s report on the labor markets of Turkey exhibits that there is a 22% difference in the wages of men and women in urban areas of Turkey (Ulutaş, 2009: 29).

Wage differential between the sexes is inversely related with the level of education. According TURKSTAT while primary school graduate women earn 41.8% percent of men,

university graduate women earn 59.1% of what men. This indicates that education only reduces the size of wage differential; it does not eliminate the difference completely.

### **Concentration of women labor in unqualified jobs**

In Turkey wage differential between men and women can be partly explained by concentration of women labor in unqualified jobs and their low levels of union membership. Trade unions are more common in the manufacturing industry where the majority of the workforce is composed of men. Also because of domestic duties mentioned previously, women are reluctant to participate in unions. In most of cases women workers are not aware of the possible benefits of union membership. Due to sex-typing in the society, in general, women are also more reluctant to take part in socially disruptive actions like strikes and boycotts. Also, unions can be said to be deficient in taking active roles about women's work issues in general. While unions usually pay attention to classical matters such as wage levels, seniority and retirement, they are usually irrelevant on such issues as childcare, sexual harassment and discrimination which are mainly related to female workforce (Urhan, 2009: 88-91). Women employments' concentration in the unregistered sectors or in the small and medium sized enterprises of the services sector is also responsible for women's low levels of union participation since it is usually more difficult for unions to organize in these sectors. Lastly, in addition to the factors mentioned above, it can be said that patriarchal style of union management possibly discourages women from joining unions (Oktay, 2008: 44).

It can be deduced from the arguments and information presented thus far that inadequate access to child care in urban labor market is the major reason for women's relatively low participation. If satisfactory child-care facilities were available many economically inactive women would return to work tomorrow. Moreover recent studies on this issue have shown that even where workplace nurseries do exist, they do not necessarily appeal to all parents with pre-school children. Some dislike the idea of a long daily commute for the child. Others feel that especially very young children need more individual motherly attention and prefer employing a caretaker or relative. Some are all too aware of the likelihood of their children catching more coughs and colds through exposure to other children (Rees, 1992: 118).

In Turkey some firms that are legally obligated to establish workplace nurseries have started to use outsourcing, made possible of recent legislation by the national assembly. However some researchers point out that this may reduce women's participation by giving

them extra difficulties such as transporting the children to and from off premise childcare centers and inability to see the children during the day (Dedeoğlu, 2009: 51). To sum up, all these considerations cause hesitation for women to use workplace nurseries even when they are available. In some instances women do not even prefer paid or family member caregivers since the mere presence of such caretakers do not necessarily guarantee quality care.

Childcare duties is not the only reason that keep women out of labor force; caring responsibilities towards the elderly are also effective in their decisions. In Turkey care of the elderly in the family is traditionally a task allocated to women. Institutional care of the elderly is still not seen as morally correct behavior by a majority of the Turkish society. According to TURKSTAT's family research done in 2006 56,2% of males and 43,0% of females prefer to be cared in their sons' or daughters' houses when they get old. Only 25% of the people approve to be cared in rest homes for elderly people (KSSGM, 2008: 13). The problem is exacerbated by the presence of only 238 institutional care providers for the elderly throughout Turkey in 2009, caring for 19,600 elderly (BIANET, 2009:1). This means that elderly care in Turkey by large is provided in homes by women. Therefore it can be considered as one of the factors that lessens women's labor force participation. Studies show that average working time of Turkish women in the labor markets is 8 years. Half of the women who are currently working in the markets will possibly move out of the labor force within 5 years because of marriage, pregnancy or home duties (İlkkaracan, 1998: 2).

### **Women's Lack of Education and Marketable Skills**

Another factor that explains the low labor force participation of Turkish women in the urbanization process is the women's lack of education and marketable skills. In general education levels of women in Turkey are quite low. According to TURKSTAT statistics, by 2006 only 16.2% of women have university education while 41.1% of them have primary school education. The situation is much worse in rural areas.

### **Women's unemployment**

Women's lack of marketable skills brings together some interrelated problems. The first and most important problem is unemployment. In fact women's high unemployment rate is a world-wide phenomenon. Unqualified women are more at risk of unemployment. Moreover various researchers have shown that even if they have the same qualification women have subordinate jobs compared to men. One reason for women's unemployment

problem is that women are forced – due to them being over represented in insecure jobs in particular- to change jobs several times a year more often than men. Moreover, they are more affected by economic redundancy and lay-offs. Another reason is related to social considerations about working women. Female unemployment seems to be more tolerated socially than male unemployment. For example the result of a survey published about ten years ago in the French paper Liberation show that 30% of women aged between 25 and 49 think that in times of high unemployment it is “*natural*” to give a job to a man rather than to a woman (Garcia, Dumont and Hacourt, 2003: 9).

As we see in the second part of this paper unemployment is a big problem for Turkey, especially for women. When unemployed some women give up job seeking and withdraw from the labor force while some of them accept inferior jobs mostly in the informal economy.

A considerable part of production and distribution of goods and services in the developing economies take place outside the formal system. In these countries informal employment generally represents a larger source of employment for women than formal employment and a greater share of women’s employment than men’s employment. In developing countries –on average- over 60 percent of women workers are in informal employment outside of agriculture (Chen et al, 2005: 11). In India and Indonesia, the informal economy accounts for nine out of every ten women working outside of agriculture. In Kenya 83%, in Tunisia 40%, in Bolivia 74%, in Brazil 44% of women work in informal economy (UN, 2000: 122).

Much of the employment in this informal economy can be termed as informal because the units or micro enterprises that create such employment are outside the recognized institutional framework and have neither the obligation nor the incentive or the means to create good quality jobs. As we mentioned above, much of female employment in developing countries tend to be informal and of a poor quality. These activities tend to be small and use low human capital /physical capital and simple technologies. Relatively lower level of education among women compared to men seems to explain in part, this gender differential in informal employment (WIEGO, 2009:1). Also having home duties and child/elderly care responsibilities that we previously cited limit women’s participation in formal employment.



## **Women's employment in informal sector**

Women's employment in Turkey shows similarity with other developing countries from the informality perspective. In 1980 Turkey has changed its industrialization policy from import substitution to an export-oriented one. This policy change together with increased globalization has made firm owners extremely sensitive to costs. Outsourcing increased as a result of this sensitiveness. The most common places of productions in outsourcing are not the big factories. Instead goods and services are produced in small sized enterprises and homes in this new system. Most of the producers in this era have preferred women workers because of their low costs, giving them some machines to encourage to product the goods in their homes. By doing so they fore fended some costs like electricity, transportation, social security premiums and obligations such as opening crèches and paying taxes. The women workers of this system have been usually the ones who have migrated to urban areas recently and living in the slum areas of the cities. The outsourcers usually give these women such menial, manual jobs such as making or processing raw materials delivered to their homes, finishing textile goods, making hand-made button holes, knitting, making up hammocks and souvenir objects etc that do not require specific knowledge (Kocacık and Gökkaya, 2005: 202).

Working at home for outsourcers of course provides some advantages to women. By this way the women, who are normally not able to work for pay because of some reasons like caring responsibilities, transportation difficulties or husband's opposition, find opportunities to be in the labor force and earn income. However it also has some negative aspects.

The first negative aspect of working at home for outsourcing firms is working long hours in return for little pay. Within the informal economy women are concentrated in jobs associated with low and unstable earnings and high risk of poverty. In fact this problem is not unique to developing countries; home working women in developed countries also suffer the same problem. For example the average outworker works over 30 hours a week and can earn as little as £56 for her weekly toil (Walsh and James, 2000: 169). However it is reported that low paid women outworkers' working conditions and earnings are far worse in developing countries.

The situation is similar in Turkey. In research conducted on women who work at home in Bursa and İstanbul it has been found that their weekly earnings are only 30% of the minimum wage in return for working 34 for hours in Bursa and 51 hours in İstanbul. Too much effort for too little return! (Lordoğlu, 1993: 106). It is clear that unpaid household work

responsibilities reinforce labor market segmentation –women are restricted to home based employment even if they have to work longer hours and earn less than they would in other types of employment.

Furthermore, home working women's not having severance pay in case of unemployment is another problem. Most important of all, these women workers do not have any social security which makes them an object of poverty.

### **Dualistic Structure**

When we look at the statistics we see that there is a dualistic feature of women's employment in urban areas. As we mentioned before, uneducated women are usually employed in the informal sector. However it is observed that women's employment rates are quite high in some jobs which require high levels of human capital. For example; 28% of Lawyers, 39% of architects, 14% of engineers, %39 of dentists, %33 of academicians are women (Kocacık and Gökkaya, 2005: 10). Nevertheless according to TURKSTAT's data for 2006 women's share in upper level executives is only 8.2%. Partly women's lack of human capital can be considered as responsible for this outcome. However it can also be said that there are unjust barriers in the way of women's opportunities for advancement (glass ceiling). Women are usually appointed to the lowest posts in the corporate pyramid or to those with the least prestige. It is known that especially in male-dominated sectors, like engineering, mining and construction, women face discrimination. Even in the sectors that mostly employ women like banking, women's intention of marriage and having children has been questioned (Dedeoğlu, 2009: 49).

### **Cultural Values against Women's Participation in Market Work**

Another factor that causes women to withdraw from the labor markets during the urbanization process is cultural values against women's participation in market work. While employed as unpaid family workers in agriculture women were simultaneously able to fulfill both their domestic duties and were under the control of their husbands. After migration this ex-agricultural women workers feel themselves obligated to move out of labor force due to opposition of husbands, families and relatives against their working in the market (KSSGM, 1998b: 11).

## **Long working hours**

As a matter of fact, one of the natural outcomes of urbanization is that living expenses increase enormously. From one perspective this situation forces women to work for pay and make contribution to family budgets. But in most cases men in the families do not approve of their wives doing so, mainly for two reasons. The first is the long working hours and the second is the possibility of sexual harassment that women may face in labor markets (Kümbetoğlu and Çağa, 2000: 63).

Statistics show that average weekly working time in Turkey is the highest among OECD countries. What that means for women in the labor force is a failure to fully perform their domestic duties. In research done on unemployed women it has been found that two main demands of women job seekers were “*normal working hours*” and “*having social security*”. According to that research, women who insist on these demands became unemployed while the ones who gave up these demands could find jobs in the informal sector. In most cases men do not approve of their wives working in such jobs (TÜRK-İŞ, 2005: 9).

## **Sexual Harassment**

Another reason that causes men to oppose their wives’ working in the labor markets is about sexual harassment. In a survey covering 31 countries in Europe including Turkey, following the Czech Republic and Norway, Turkey along with Croatia is the third country from the point of view of sexual harassment assurance (35.4%) (ABHABER, 2009:1). Micro studies on this issue support this result.

In a study of textile sector workers aged 12 to 19 in Denizli, 12% stated that they were subjected to sexual harassment. Similarly, in a different study 35.4% of women workers in the banking sector in Erzurum indicated that they were experiencing sexual harassment in their work places (Gerni, 2001: 21, 30). According to another survey in Bursa performed on 250 blue and white collar women workers 28% of women faced sexual molestation (Aytaç, 2001: 118).

While objections of men to their wives’ working in the market seemingly rests on two points that we briefly explained above, in fact its origin goes to the patriarchal type of thinking which is still valid, especially in uneducated families. In a survey in İstanbul 64.1 percent of the women who had withdrawn from the labor market after migration expressed that it was their own decision to do so whereas 24.4% of the non-working women accepted

that they decided to quit working in the market at their husband's and father's request. However, how many of these women hid the internalized pressure on them is a big question mark (KSSGM, 1999: 108).

Researches on this issue point out that there is an inverse relationship between the education levels of women and their families' opposition to working in the labor markets for pay. Kuzgun and Sevim proved that resistance of the men mostly comes from the traditions instead of religion (Kuzgun and Sevim, 2004: 24)

### **Unfavorable Labor Market Conditions**

In Turkey, macroeconomic structure is also effective in determining women's labor force participation, especially in urban areas. One of the main features of the Turkish economy is its unsteady growth pattern.

It is generally accepted that frequent periods of recession in the Turkish economy have negative effects on women's employment. In a study which was based on the pooled data of all provinces of Turkey it was found that an expansion of the economy during an upswing increases the female non-agricultural labor force participation. The same study also found that female non-agricultural labor force participation was more responsive to the changes in female unemployment than to the male unemployment. This result shows that there is hidden unemployment of women. It also indicates that there are discouraged women who would join the labor market if conditions were favorable (Tansel, 2002: 18-19).

It is generally accepted that migration from rural to urban areas in Turkey has profoundly changed the labor market structure. The transformation in the labor market resulted in different trends for women and men. While men were, to a large extent, able to compensate the fall in agricultural employment by shifting to non agricultural activities, women on the other hand had to work in service jobs in the informal sector or had to leave the market voluntarily because they were not favored by the industry as a work force (Özar, 1994: 28). Although Turkey had changed its industrialization policies from import substitution to an export oriented one in 1980, increase in low wage women's employment in exporting industries (feminization of employment) did not happen. In this conversion period women's labor force participation rate fell from 72% in 1955 to 24.9% in 2006. Considering this fact it can be said that employment in Turkey indeed became masculine.

### **Insufficient job creation**

There is no doubt that insufficient job creation in the economy has played the dominant role in reduction of Turkish women's labor force participation. In order to reduce Turkish unemployment rate to 6.6%, it is calculated that the the growth rate of the economy has to be 6% per year (Gürsel et al., 2002: 226). Job creation in the cities have to be much higher than rural areas because of rapid urbanization. This has not been achieved even during the rapid and relatively continuous period of growth of 2002-2008. During this period Turkey experienced *jobless growth*. This inadequacy of job creation in the economy has been a major factor in women's non participation in labor.

### **Occupational Segregation**

The concentration of women in the service sector jobs can be explained by the phenomenon of segmented labor market. Although on the decline during the last two decades, occupational segregation by sex is still very extensive all over the world and has remained virtually unchanged in most Middle Eastern and North African countries. Where labor market segmentation remains strong and women are excluded from careers or have little occupational mobility and are not able to satisfy their status aspirations, they may seek to enhance their self-esteem and status in motherhood (Lim, ? : 208). As a Middle Eastern country the situation is the same in Turkey. Even though the gender borders of jobs are not as sharp as they were before, for some occupations male domination is still present. Partly because of this, women's employment has been concentrated on the sector where the available jobs tend to inferior. .

### **Increase in Enrollment Rates at All Levels of Schooling**

One factor that can be used in explaining women's LFPR reduction is the increase in enrollment rates at all levels of schooling. As a human capital investment it is known that education affects labor force participation from both positive and negative aspects. During the schooling stage people have to be present in the classrooms and usually are not able to work in labor markets. Therefore this stage reduces labor market participation rates. However, once the investment stage is completed education increases labor force participation through several reasons.

## **Education and labor force participation**

Firstly, education enriches people's employment opportunities. Secondly, education upgrades people's labor markets from domestic to national and/or international levels. Jobs that employ uneducated workers are characterized poor wages and few prospects of promotion. Since in most cases there is excess labor supply for these jobs, it is very easy for firms to fill such low level vacancies. Therefore it is very rare to find wanted ads in newspapers for such jobs. As a result of this uneducated workers are hardly informed about job opportunities in other cities or regions. On the other hand it is possible to find newspaper advertisements for the vacant positions that require high levels of education. This provides educated workers to have employment opportunities not just in the cities they live, but in different cities and countries as well. Finally, since education is a costly investment -in terms of direct costs, psychological costs and foregone earnings- investors feel compelled to be in the labor force (Biçerli, 2007: 67-68).

In Turkey one of the causes of low LFPRs in especially urban areas is increasing enrollment rates at all levels of schooling. The 1997 Law which extended the compulsory schooling from five to eight years also contributed to an increase in enrollment rates and delayed entry into the labor markets for both genders.

As we briefly explained above, while educational attainment takes people out of labor markets during the period of investment, it increases labor market participation afterwards. Statistics confirm that there is a positive relationship between education level and labor force participation particularly for the women who live in urban areas. In rural areas education has little impact on labor force participation except at university level, while in urban areas female participation is responsive to different levels of education. Taking these two facts together, we may expect that the role of women in the labor markets will increase in the near future (Tansel, 2002: 6).

## **Some Suggestions**

In developing countries women mostly work as unpaid family workers in agriculture and in some non-market activities such as home production and voluntary jobs. Since they are somehow working, even as unpaid family workers, they are accepted as to be participating in the labor force. In urban areas, however, women have limited paid work opportunities to be in the labor market which lessens their labor market participation rates and employment rates.

Besides other factors that reduce women's labor force participation in urban areas, ongoing migration from rural to urban areas seems to play the dominant role in this result.

Like many developing countries, Turkey has a similar trend on this issue. According to the OECD Employment Report of 2005, in Turkey, only 26.3 percent of active women population is employed. With this ratio, Turkey has the lowest employment rate for women among OECD member. Even in Mexico, which is the closest country to Turkey in the OECD's ranking, this rate is 41.3%. Women's employment rate is 55.7% for EU25.

In Turkey, there is a huge gap in women's labor force participation rates for urban and rural areas. While women in rural areas are mostly employed as unpaid family workers, when they move to urban areas as a result of ongoing domestic migration, they are unable to find jobs due to their low educational levels. Limited employment opportunities and low probability of finding a decent job push a vast majority of women out of the labor force. Since 1988 women's LFPR in urban areas has changed between 15-19%. Migration from rural to urban areas also causes reduction in women's labor force participation rates in rural areas. According to the SIS statistics this rate has decreased from 52% in 1990 to 31.6 % in 2006.

It is known that the economic well being of a population is determined not only by how much each working person earns, but also what proportion of the population works. Therefore it is vital to increase labor force participation of women especially in urban areas of Turkey. It is also a requirement to adjust Turkey's labor markets in conformity with the European Employment Strategy. Unfortunately so far the Turkish Governments has not produced effective projects to address this problem. Through the lens of this study we can make the following suggestions:

- Child care services for the benefit of working parents need to be considerably expanded to meet the demand. Government assistance to companies to provide more workplace nurseries will be beneficial. Also childcare subsidies reduce the relative price of childcare thereby increasing the return of market work relative the home production. There is evidence in OECD countries that more generous childcare subsidies are accompanied by higher female participation. In addition to this, assistance to workers with sick or elderly dependants will ease women's entrance to labor force. These subsidies should be targeted to low-income mothers whose labor supply is more responsive to such assistances.
- However, establishing childcare subsidies will most likely impose a net budgetary cost. This may require an increase in tax rates or a cut in other budgetary expenditures. It is also

possible that such subsidies may encourage excessive consumption of childcare. From realistic point of view we must confess that it is quite difficult for a country like Turkey which has instable macroeconomic conjuncture and in most cases designs its economic policies under the pressure of the IMF. But as an English proverb says “*where there is a will there is always a way*”. Government should try to find additional resources to finance such a reform. We believe that the benefits of childcare subsidies will exceed its costs.

- Because there is a strong link between education and female activity rates, policy makers should focus on increasing female education levels in both urban and rural areas. It is widely recognized that educated women can earn more income and pay for childcare costs. Education will also increase women’s access to decent jobs outside of the informal sector.
- Increasing women’s education level is an aim that can be attained in the medium or long term. However it is necessary to do something urgently for the uneducated women who have recently migrated to urban areas. Active Labor Market Policies (ALMPs) targeting this group will increase their employability by giving them marketable skills.
- Reducing the unemployment rates will help to increase women’s LFPRs by drawing the discouraged women workers into the labor force. Therefore measures to decrease unemployment rates will be needed to increase women’s integration to the labor force.
- A policy to register the informal economic activities is required to improve working women’s incomes and working conditions. Since most of the women work in informal sector, such approach may limit women’s employment opportunities in the short run. But in the medium and long terms shrinking the informal sector may assist to broaden the number of decent jobs which in turn will develop women’s position in the labor markets.
- In order to increase women’s engagement to the labor markets it is necessary to apply positive discrimination to women until a balanced position between men and women in the working life is obtained. Recently the Turkish Government started a policy to stimulate women’s employment and provided some facilities to the entrepreneurs such as subsidizing women workers’ social security premiums and tax incentives for per employed women. These kinds of supports should be continued.
- Even though they are not perfect substitutes for the full-time jobs, part-time jobs may ease women’s entrance to the labor force. This type of employment is not as common as it is in OECD countries. According to the statistics of 2005 on average women’s proportion who work on part-time basis was 72.9% in OECD countries whereas it was 59.4% in Turkey



(MESS, 2008: 1). Flexible working-time arrangements and the possibility to work part-time help women to combine market work with traditional family responsibilities. The possibility to find a part-time job can be crucial to the labor force participation of these women, particularly when family responsibilities cannot be discharged in another way. Governments should provide incentives to increase the numbers and qualities of part-time jobs.

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