

An Analysis of Trends in Female Labor Force Participation in Turkey

Ceyda Özsoy¹ - Sevilay Atlama²

High female participation in the labor market implies both an advance in the relative economic and social position of women and also an increased utilization of human potential for economic development. The female labor force participation rates have increased substantially in developed countries. However, either many developing countries or Turkey the female labor force participation rates show a declining trend. In Turkey, from 1955 to 2009 labor force participation rate diminished from 72 percent to about 25 percent. This ratio is nearly one third of the rate for men in recent years. Additionally, Turkey has the lowest rate among OECD countries. Several factors can be taken to explain this trend. In this paper, we investigate the reasons for the declining trend in the female labor force in Turkey. Some of those: recent increases in enrollment rates at all levels of schooling delay entry into the labor market of younger, the changing composition of the labor force away from agriculture towards non-agricultural activities, cultural values against their participation in market work, their lack of education and marketable skills, unfavorable labor market conditions, huge wage gap and imparity promotion opportunities between female and male workers, exclusion from social security, and early retirement system.

Keywords: Female labor force, Female labor force participation rate, Turkey

1. Introduction

Before analyzing recent trends in the women's labor force participation rate, we need to define what we mean by female labor force participation rate. Female labor force participation rate indicates the ratio of the female labor force to the female population 15 year of age and over. Labor force refers to the share of the working age population who are either in a job or actively looking for one (Abhayaratna-Lattimore 2006).

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The female labor force participation rates have increased considerably in the developed countries in recent years. In contrast, in many developing countries and in Turkey the female labor force participation rates show a declining trend (Tansel 2001). During the last decade, a number of studies have pointed to this decline and the strikingly low rates of labor force participation and have analyzed its consequences for both men and women (World Bank 1993, Özbay 1991 and 1994, Özar 1994, Ecevit 1998, Ecevit et al. 2000, Tansel 2001).

There are several reasons for the declining trends in the labor force participation rates in Turkey. Structural changing composition of the labor force away from agricultural towards nonagricultural activities and consequently rural-urban migration has rightly been considered as the main reasons for this decline. This is why the withdrawal of women from traditional agricultural activities in which they formerly engaged (Ecevit 2003). Second, recently, younger populations have been staying in school longer. This contributes to the declining trends in the participation rates of the young. Third, the early retirement scheme introduced in the early 1980s is another factor that contributed to the declining participation rates of the middle to older age groups (Tansel 2001). Besides, unemployment rates, educational attainments and skill levels, the “discouraged worker” effects, and prevailing cultural norms that exclude participation in market work may also play a role in the low participation rates of women in urban areas. In addition, the failure of official labor statistics to cover workers in the informal sectors needs to be taken into account when analyzing the patterns of the female labor force participation rate in urban areas where uneducated and unskilled women work in informal sectors (Palaz 2005). Women’s personal and family characteristics include age, years of schooling and their marital status, number of children and children’s age group also affect female participation rates (Dayıoğlu-Kasnakoğlu 1997).

In this paper, we focus on trends in the female labor force participation rate and examine the factors, which influence women’s decision to enter the labor force. In addition to this analysis, we examine policies, which provide more and better work opportunities for women identified by Turkish State Planning Organization (SPO 2006) in 9th Development Plan.

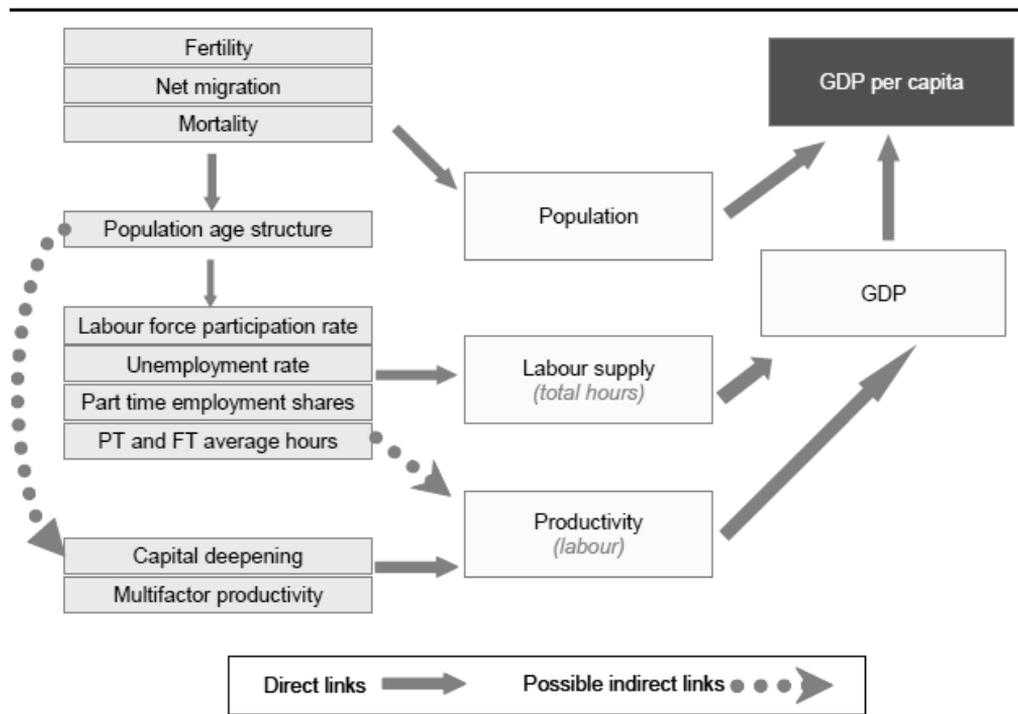
2. Why Does High Female Labor Force Participation Desirable?

A high female participation rate is desirable on several grounds. High female participation in the labor market implies both an advance in the relative economic and social position of women and also an increased utilization of human potential for economic growth and development (Kızılırmak 2005).

Higher female employment is instrumental in building capacity for economic growth and poverty reduction. Three key factors that impact on economic growth,

often referred to the three P's, are population, participation (or labor supply) and productivity (figure 1).

Figure 1. The 'Three Ps' of Economic Growth: Population, Participation and Productivity



Source: PC (Productivity Commission) 2005, Economic Implications of an Ageing Australia, Research Report, Canberra

The higher the number of people participating in the workforce, or the more hours worked, the higher the potential output produced and, assuming everything else unchanged, the higher the potential level of GDP per capita (Abhayaratna-Lattimore 2006). According to Argy (2005), joblessness (or non-participation) ‘represents a big waste of national economic potential’.

But, economic growth is not the only reason why participation matters. Higher workforce participation can also reduce the fiscal pressures associated with providing welfare support and serve social inclusion and equity goals (OECD 2003a).

In addition to these outcomes, higher female employment increases labor supply, productivity and standard of living, reduce poverty among women and children. More and better jobs for women mean higher incomes and better life for them, their family and also society as a whole. Using women’s talents and skills in

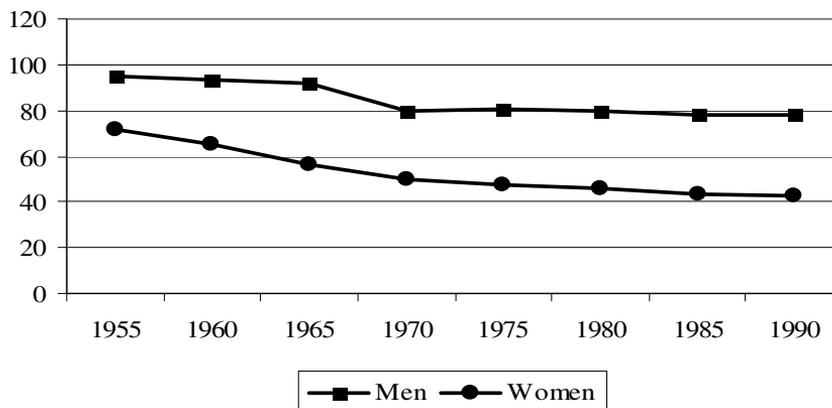
the labor market not only provides families with more economic independence, but also increases women's self confidence and social respectability. (SPO-World Bank 2009a).

At the meanwhile, higher levels of female employment allow government investments in education to be used more efficiently as women use their acquired talents productively in the economy. In countries with low levels of female employment, families often under-invest in girl's education. On the contrary, working women generally are more involved than non-working women in making decisions in relation to their children's education and health, which are externalities that positively affect the welfare of future generations (SPO-World Bank 2009b). As a last outcome of higher female employment is "gender equity".

3. The Trend of Female Labor Force Participation Rate in Turkey

According to the population census and household labor force survey results, overall labor force participation rates have been decreased gradually over the last 50 years in Turkey - from 95.4 percent in 1955 to 69.1 percent in 2009 among men, likewise from 72.0 percent in 1955 to 23.5 percent in 2009 among women (World Bank 1993). It can be easily seen on Figure 2 and Table 1, labor force participation rates are especially low level and diminishing nature both women and men.

Figure 2. Labor Force Participation Rates by Gender, Turkey (1955-1990)



Source: TURKSTAT, Statistical Indicators 1923-1990, Table 1-8, 38 (from Özbay, 1994)

Notes: The population census figures for the years 1955-1965 include population 15 year of age and over while for 1970-1990 they include population 12 years of age and over

Table 1. Labor Force Participation Rates by Gender, Turkey (1991-2009)

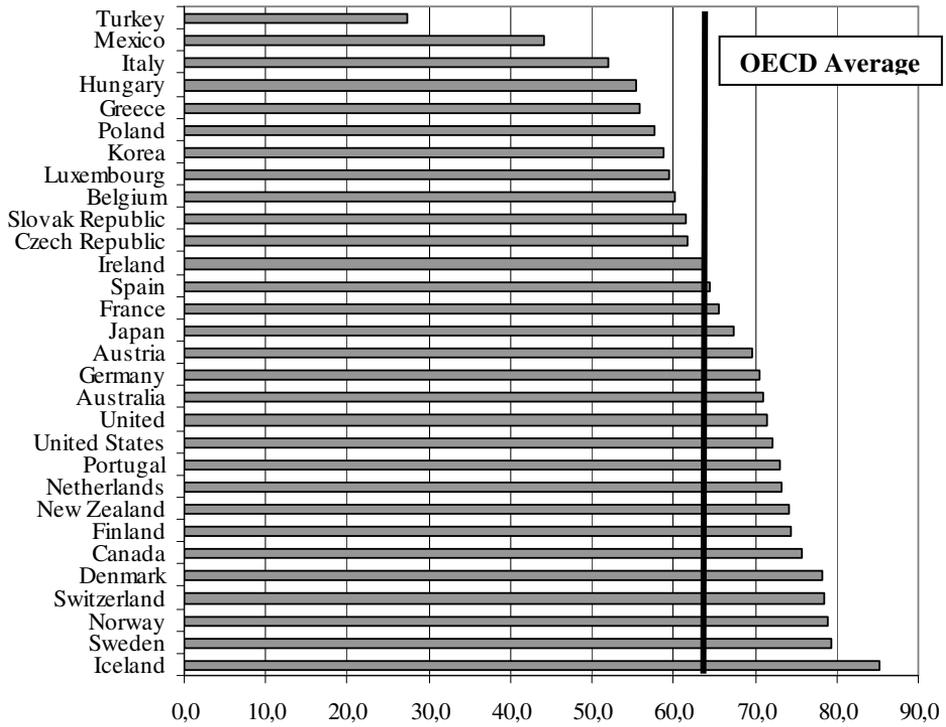
Years	Total (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Years	Total (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
1991	57.0	80.2	34.1	2002	49.6	71.6	27.9
1992	56.0	79.6	32.7	2003	48.3	70.4	26.6
1993	52.1	78.0	26.8	2004	48.7	72.3	25.4
1994	54.6	78.5	31.3	2005	48.3	72.2	24.8
1995	54.1	77.8	30.9	2006	48.0	71.5	24.9
1996	53.7	77.3	30.6	2007	47.8	71.3	24.8
1997	52.6	76.7	28.8	2008	46.9	70.1	24.5
1998	52.8	76.7	29.3	2009	45.9	69.1	23.5

Source: TURKSTAT, Household Labor Force Survey Results (www.turkstat.gov.tr)

Note: Labor force participation rates include population 15 year of age and over

Figure 3 shows labor force participation rates among OECD countries. According to OECD Employment Report statistics, average labor force participation rate for OECD countries in 2008 was 63.2 percent for women. Iceland has the highest rate (85.4 percent), while Turkey has the lowest female labor force participation rate. In fact Turkey is only country stayed below 30 percent.

Figure 3. Female Force Participation Rates, OECD Countries (2008) (%)



Source: OECD Employment Report 2008

4. Factors Which Determine Low Participation to Labor Force of Women in Turkey

Table 2. Person Not in Labor Force by Reason and Gender, Turkey (15 years old and over), (Thousand)

Reasons for not being in labor force	1988				2008			
	Men	%	Women	%	Men	%	Women	%
Available for work but not seeking a job								
Discouraged	120	3,8	244	2,2	371	5,0	241	1,2
Other	77	2,5	178	1,6	460	6,2	778	4,0
Seasonal Worker	12	0,4	22	0,2	72	0,9	243	1,2
House wife	-	-	8.860	78,9	-	-	12.186	62,4
Student	998	31,9	564	0,5	2.086	28,0	1671	8,6
Retired	921	29,5	195	1,7	2.806	37,7	682	3,5
Disabled or ill	539	17,2	813	7,2	1.270	17,1	2.144	11,0
Family or Personal Reasons	-	-	-	-	107	1,4	1155	5,9
Other	458	13,7	353	3,1	268	3,6	427	2,2
Total	3.125	100	11.229	100	7.441	100	19.526	100

Source: TURKSTAT, Household Labor Force Survey Results (www.turkstat.gov.tr)

Table 2 indicates the reasons accounting for non-participation of women in labor force. According to the data, the most important reason not to enter the labor force for women is being a housewife (62.4 percent). Other reasons such as being a student, being retired or disabled and ill etc. have little affect on not entering the labor force. However for men, being retired or a student are the most important factors pertaining to why men do not join the labor force (Palaz 2005). While about 38 percent of males are out of labor force in their retired status, the proportion of women presently retired after having worked formally under a security scheme is extremely low (only 3,5 percent in 2008). Another striking imbalance is the fact that while 8,6 percent of women remain out of labor force due to student position, 28 percent for males.

What are the reasons for female labor force participation rates are low level and diminishing nature in Turkey? It can be explain to this question under three basic headings. Firstly; structural transformation from agriculture to industry and urban migration, Secondly; economic constrains and lastly; personal and family characteristics.

4.1. Structural Transformation From Agriculture to Industry and Urban Migration

Since the early 1970's, Turkey has experienced fast growth and a structural transformation from an agricultural economy to an industrial one. The changing structures of the Turkish economy and the nation's rapid urbanization have affected the composition of the labor force (Kasnakoğlu-Dayıoğlu 1997).

Despite the restructuring of the Turkish economy from agriculture to industry about 40 years, a considerable number of women are still employed in agriculture. Table 3 shows the distribution of employment by sector of economic activity for men and women. The agricultural employment constituted about 35.7 percent of the men's employment and about 76.9 percent of the women's employment in 1988. In 2008, 42.1 percent of women compared to 17.8 percent of men were working in this field. This high percentage share of agriculture within female employment also persists despite a large movement of rural population to cities. But generally migration from rural to urban negatively affected the female participation rate more than males. While women have traditionally had a source of employment in agriculture as unpaid family workers, they can not participate in urban labor force after the migration (Palaz 2005). This is because a majority of urban women are housewives; whereas, nearly all rural women work outside the home in agriculture. Hence, women become housewives or engaged in unregistered informal job when they moved to urban areas.

Table 3. The Distribution of Employment by Sector of Economic Activity and Gender, Turkey (15 years old and over), (%)

Sector	1988		2008	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Agriculture	35,7	76,9	17,8	42,1
Industry	25,2	8,7	22,4	14,9
Service	39,9	14,4	59,8	43,0

Source: TURKSTAT, Household Labor Force Survey Results (www.turkstat.gov.tr)

On the other hand, In Turkey, service sector employment has grown rather rapidly and become the largest employing sector for men and the second largest employing sector for women, after agriculture, in 2008. Actually, the decline of agriculture and the growth of the service sector are common for developing societies such as Turkey.

Between the periods 1988 and 2008, employment in industry and service increased; nonetheless, the representation of women in these sectors remained low when compared to men. Although women's participation to the service sector has increased in this period, their participation to industry sector is very low (at 43 percent and about 15 percent respectively in 2008). The reasons for women's low

participation in industry and increased participation in service are the rapid growth of the service sector and the creation of a greater number of jobs for women there than in the industrial sector. In that sense, at least in urban areas, the service sector is the most promising in terms of women’s future employment. One reason for this increase might be the expansion of jobs that are considered suitable for women in various sub-branches of the sector (Ecevit 2003).

Table 4. Labor Force Participation Rates by Gender and Geographical Location in Selected Years (%)

Years	Men		Women	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
1988	78.1	84.7	17.7	50.7
1990	76.8	83.0	17.0	52.0
1995	74.1	82.6	16.8	49.3
2000	70.9	77.9	17.2	40.2
2001	70.6	76.3	17.4	41.7
2002	69.8	74.5	19.1	41.4
2003	68.9	72.9	18.5	39.0
2004	70.8	74.7	18.3	36.7
2005	71.5	73.5	19.3	33.7
2006	70.8	72.9	19.9	33.0
2007	70.6	72.6	20.2	32.7
2008	70.7	73.2	21.1	33.1

Source: TURKSTAT, Household Labor Force Survey Results (www.turkstat.gov.tr)

Reduction in the women’s labor force participation rates from 50.7 percent in 1988 to 33.1 percent in 2008 is a clear sign of rural to urban migration. In Turkey, urbanization has been accelerated and it still carries on by increasing its speed. Nowadays, while 70 percent of the population has lived in cities, only 30 percent of them have lived in urban areas. 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. However in 1988-2008 period urban labor force participation rates 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 (Biçerli-Gündoğan 2009).

Table 4 demonstrates the labor force participation rates by gender and geographical location. During the period from 1988 to 2008, there is a great disparity between the participation rate of rural and urban area. The labor force participation rate of women is especially low in urban areas. While in 1988, the labor force participation rate of urban women was 17.7 percent, the rate for their

rural counterparts was 50.7 percent. Although the gap between urban and rural participation rates of female labor force started to close, the gap between female and male labor force both urban and rural areas have been continued increasingly.

The lower participation of women in the urban labor market stems directly from the nature of employment in urban areas. Agriculture, where schooling is not a prerequisite to employment, plays an important role in the urban areas, whereas industry and service, which require a relatively more educated labor force, dominate the urban labor market (Dayıođlu-Kasnakođlu 1997).

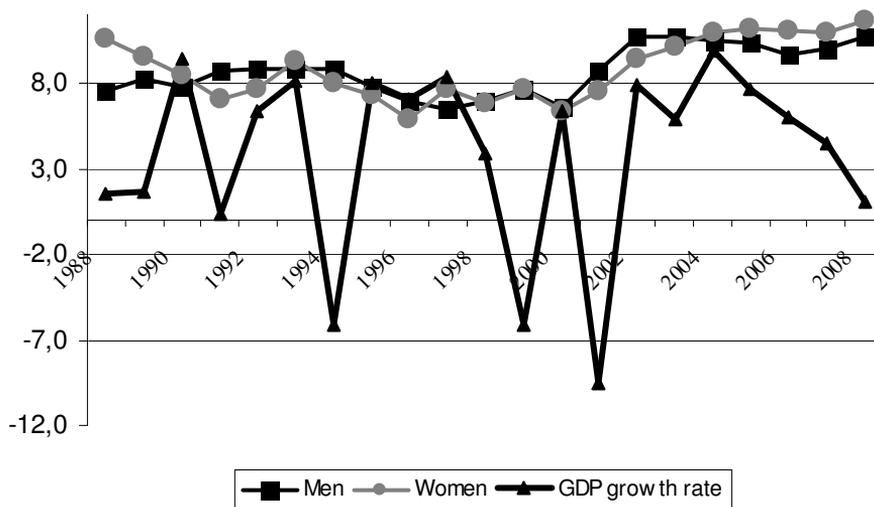
4.2. Economic Constrains

4.2.1. Economic Crises and Unemployment

Turkey has experienced many economic crises. The shrinkage occurred in real sector; because of the following one after another economic crises have been emerged higher unemployment rates. As can be seen on Figure 4, economic crises which occurred in 1994, 1999, 2001 and last crisis in 2008, GDP growth rate has extremely decreased. Actually, Turkish economy could not create enough job while high growth performance period. At present, the phenomenon of growth without employment creation is valid for Turkey too. However, it is not true to say, “firstly women are dismissed their job at the economic crises periods”. In 2000-2002 women’s labor force participation rate higher than that of men. Because of the influence of 2000 and 2001 crises, a significant rate of men was being unemployed.

At the economic hardship times, unemployment force, especially women who are not working previously, have to seek employment outside of the family. High employment rate causes a negative effect in expectation of finding jobs that seems especially in women who are available for work. They increasingly tend to give up seeking jobs and join the group of housewives and discouraged workers. Alternatively, women are trying to protect their families from poverty by working informal sector. Low educated women usually work at domestic cleaning, child minding or home-working (paid work at home) in order to overcome economic difficulties and thus become members of the informal sector (Ecevit 2003).

Figure 4. GDP Growth Rate and Unemployment Rate by Gender, (%)



Source: TURKSTAT (www.turkstat.gov.tr)

4.2.2. Unregistered Employment

Unregistered employment is at the core of understanding urban unemployment problems. In an environment where the formal sector has been unable to create enough jobs to absorb growth in the urban labor force resulting from both migrations to cities and births there, unregistered employment becomes a remedy for the unemployment. The formal sector offers only limited job opportunities for the unskilled and uneducated population. In addition to this, unequal income distribution and widespread poverty together with the costly process of searching for formal jobs appears as major barriers to entry into the formal sector. For economically deprived individuals, labor income is the main source of revenue (Gündoğan 2007).

Unregistered employment is also a wide spread problem in the Turkish economy. In 2006 almost half of the total employment (48.5 percent) was unregistered. Some of the common features of informal sector employment are lack of protection, limited provision or absence of social security benefits, and insufficient income (Ecevit 2003). It seems that women have a clear disadvantage in this regard. For the same year women's unregistered employment ratio (66 percent) was nearly 20 points higher than that of men's.

The increasing employment of women in the informal sector can be put down to various reasons. First of all, unregistered employment is especially a widespread event 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 (Biçerli-Gündoğan 2009). Secondly, with the increase in unemployment, women are tending to lose ground in the formal sectors of the economy. Thirdly, stagnating and falling household incomes due to the poor performance of the economy also leads to the increased entry of women into the informal labor market (as explained formerly). Lastly, export-oriented industries, in the search for cheap labor, favour women's employment. These factors are leading to the increasing informalization of the female labor force. This informalization takes place broadly in one way: work is being pushed out of factories and formal work situations into small workshops (sweatshops), mall-scale ateliers in the garment and textile industry, homes and informal situations (Özdemir et al. 2004).

4.2.3. Unqualified Jobs and Unfavorable Working Conditions

Women often work 'feminized' sectors and professions and remain in lower job categories with less access to senior positions. Occupational and sectoral segregation has remained almost unchanged, indicating that the increase in female employment has taken place in sectors already dominated by women. A better gender balance across studies and occupations could contribute to meeting future skills and labor market needs (European Commission 2009).

In addition, broadening access for women to employment in an enlarged scope of industries and occupations will be important to enhancing opportunities for them in the labor market. In its latest report on global employment trends for women (2008), the International Labor Office (ILO 2008) states: "Society's ability to accept new economic roles for women and the economy's ability to create the jobs to accommodate them are the key prerequisites to improving labor market outcomes for women, as well as for economic development on the whole".

The poorer the region, the greater the likelihood that women are among the ranks of the contributing family workers or own-account workers. The two statuses together make up the newly defined "vulnerable employment". Vulnerable employment is a newly defined measure of persons who are employed under relatively precarious circumstances as indicated by the status in employment. Because contributing family workers and own-account workers are less likely to have formal work arrangements, access to benefits or social protection programmes and are more "at risk" to economic cycles, these are the statuses categorized as "vulnerable". The vulnerable employment rate, therefore, is calculated as the sum of own account workers and contributing family workers as a percentage of total employment. The indicator is highly gender sensitive since, historically, contributing family work is a status that is dominated by women. There is also a connection between vulnerable employment and poverty: if the proportion of vulnerable workers is sizeable, it may be an indication of widespread poverty. The connection arises because workers in the vulnerable statuses lack the social protection and

safety nets to guard against times of low economic demand and often are incapable of generating sufficient savings for themselves and their families to offset these times. The indicator is not without its limitations; some wage and salaried workers might also carry high economic risk and some own-account workers might be quite well-off and not vulnerable at all. But, despite the limitations, vulnerable employment shares are indicative of employment in the informal economy, especially for the less developed economies and regions, and the fact that a strong correlation has been established between high poverty rates for a region and high shares in vulnerable employment does substantiate the weight of the new indicator to measure progress towards the goal of decent employment for all (ILO 2008).

Table 5. The Distribution of Employment by Employment Status and Gender, Turkey (15 years old and over), (%)

Employment Status	1988		2008	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Regular employee	39,4	18,1	56,8	47,6
Casual employee	8,6	4,6	7,0	5,6
Employer	4,9	0,2	7,5	1,4
Self employed	33,8	6,8	23,8	11,0
Unpaid family workers	13,5	70,2	4,9	34,4

Source: TURKSTAT, Household Labor Force Survey Results (www.turkstat.gov.tr)

As is seen in Table 5, the employment status of women and men also differs markedly. Most women work either in regular employment (47.6 percent) or in casual employment (5.6 percent); 34.4 percent work as unpaid family workers. There is a similar point regarding the employment status for men as well: the highest percentages of men (56.8 percent) work as regular employees (waged and salaried). However, while 31.3 percent of men are self-employed or employers, only 12.4 percent of women have this employment status. The most significant characteristic of the working status of women is the high ratio of unpaid family workers. Although the share of this group within the female labor force has decreased steadily from 70.2 percent in 1988 to about 35 percent in 2008, it is still high when compared to women in other employment categories. This originates mainly from the fact that almost all women working in agriculture are considered unpaid family workers whereas all rural heads of households (men) are considered self-employed. When compare to the number of men working as unpaid family workers is almost over one-sixth of the number of women working under a similar status.

4.2.4. Gender Differences in Earned Income

One of the consequences of gender segregation on the labor market is the persisting gender pay gap, (the difference between the wages earned by women and those earned by men) partly due to the fact that women are concentrated in less valued jobs and positions than men. Because women are more likely to work part-time and interrupt their career for family reasons, they are likely to face negative consequences in terms of pay, career advancement and accumulated pension rights. This also has an impact on the risk of falling into poverty (European Commission 2009).

The main cause of gender pay gap is gender difference in human capital. This simply means that women's levels of education, skill and experience, as their human capital, continue to remain lower than those of men. This is thus the widely accepted view of why women are paid less than men (Ecevit 2003).

Table 6. The Gender Gap in Earnings

	Estimated Earned Income (PPP US\$) 2006		Ratio of Estimated Female to Male Earned Income
	Female	Male	Female/Male
Very High Human Development			
Norway	46.576	60.394	0,77
Japan	21.143	46.706	0,45
United States	34.996	56.536	0,62
United Kingdom	28.421	42.133	0,67
Greece	19.216	38.002	0.51
High Human Development			
Hungary	16.143	21.625	0,75
Cuba	4.132	8.442	0,49
Bulgaria	9.132	13.439	0,68
Romania	10.053	14.808	0,68
Turkey	5.352	20.441	0,26
Medium Human Development			
Iran	5.304	16.449	0,32
China	4.323	6.375	0,48
Indonesia	2.263	5.163	0,44
South Africa	7.328	12.273	0,60
India	1.304	4.130	0,32
Low Human Development			
Ethiopia	624	936	0,67
Mozambique	759	848	0,90
Sierra Leone	577	783	0,74
Afghanistan	442	1.845	0,24
Niger	318	929	0,34

Source: UNDP, Human Development Report 2009, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2009, p. 181-189

Table 6 demonstrates “gender pay gap” in selected countries. As it can be seen on table, the wages of working women are extremely lower than those of men in Turkey. In fact, it is known that even in countries with very high human development, women’s earnings are generally lower than that of men’s. According to the Human Development Report 2009, women in Turkey earn average 26 percent to men’s. Although Turkey is in the high human development category to United

Nation Development Programme, the low ratio of estimated female to male earned income is a good indicator in terms of the gender gap.

4.3. Personal and Family Characteristics

4.3.1. Educational Attainment

People with lower educational qualifications are both less likely to be labor force participants and more likely to be without a job even if they actively seek one. Differences in unemployment rates for males and females generally decrease with educational attainment (OECD 2008). Similarly differences in labor force participation rates for males and females generally decrease with educational attainment. So, there is a positive relationship between an increased level of education and women's participation to labor force. While this correlation is less pronounced in rural areas, labor force participation of urban females increases clearly with their educational status. Education not only lays the ground for wage increases by raising productivity, but also gives social legitimacy to this participation by weakening patriarchal ways of thinking (Toksöz 2007).

Table 7. Labor Force Participation Rates by Educational Attainment and Gender, Turkey (15 years old and over)

Educational Attainment	1988		2008	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Illiterate	70,5	32,3	36,0	14,5
Literate-No Diploma	76,3	31,7	50,7	18,5
Primary School	88,9	34,3	75,1	21,1
Middle and Voc-Middle School	61,4	19,5	82,9	21,6
High School	75,5	45,7	66,2	29,1
Voc. High School	82,8	52,5	80,3	38,3
University	89,5	82,5	82,7	70,0

Source: TURKSTAT, Household Labor Force Survey Results (www.turkstat.gov.tr)

Table 7 shows labor force participation rates by educational attainment and gender. In 2008, the female labor force participation rate increase along with educational achievement (the lowest rate being recorded for illiterates and the highest rate for university graduates). For males, labor force participation does not show much change with respect to educational status. The relationship between schooling and labor force participation rate only becomes apparent at higher education levels for both genders.

4.3.2. Age structure

Table 8. Labor Force Participation Rates by Age Group and Gender, Turkey

Age Group	1988		2008	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
15-19	64,2	40,5	36,7	17,1
20-24	87,5	40,8	71,8	33,2
25-29	97,9	35,9	92,3	33,3
30-34	98,5	36,4	94,8	31,5
35-39	98,5	35,5	94,8	32,4
40-44	95,8	34,5	93,4	28,7
45-49	89,0	34,3	80,7	24,7
50-54	82,4	34,1	64,6	20,3
55-59	71,0	27,3	48,2	16,4
60-64	58,1	19,8	37,7	13,1
65+	33,3	10,1	19,4	5,8

Source: TURKSTAT, Household Labor Force Survey Results (www.turkstat.gov.tr)

Table 8 demonstrates the labor force participation rates by age groups and gender. Not surprisingly, prime working age (25 to 45 years) make-up the vast majority of the labor force. For both genders, participation rates increase by age, reach a peak around the ages of 25-45 for men and 20-40 for women and decline thereafter.

Tansel (2001) shows in her study that younger population (15-24 years old) have been staying in school longer recently. The 1997 law, which extended the duration of compulsory primary education from five to eight years, and the current increase in enrolment rates at all levels of schooling have helped to delay recent participation rates of the young population. Another reason for declining trends in the female force participation rates could be the early retirement system introduced in early 1980`s. According to these retirement arrangements women at age 50 or after 20 years of service and men after 25 years of service or at age 55 had the right to retire. This institutional arrangement contributed to the lower participation rates of the middle to older age groups. This retirement plan has since been changed, as longer years of service and higher age limits were introduced in 2001. The new law is expected to increase participation rates around 50 years of age (Tansel 2001).

4.3.3. Marriage and Child Care responsibilities of Women

The relationship between marital status and female participation reveals that single women and divorced women have much higher participation rates than married and widowed women (see Table 9). It is well known that financial motivation is the most important factor in women`s participation for divorced women, because they are the

head of the household and need to support their family and children. Single women's labor force participation rates are likely to be higher than married women's because they do not have family obligations, but it is likely to be lower than the participation rate of divorced women because financial need is not as important to them (Palaz 2005).

Table 9. Labor Force Participation Rates by Marital Status and Gender, Turkey (15 years old and over)

Marital Status	1988		2008	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Single	71,8	47,8	58,3	35,3
Married	86,4	32,0	76,2	22,4
Divorced	81,1	41,5	69,1	42,9
Widowed	30,1	16,0	19,3	8,6

Source: TURKSTAT, Household Labor Force Survey Results (www.turkstat.gov.tr)

The effect of husband's employment situation on wife's participation is also a good indicator of women's status in the labor market, specifically of their "secondary worker" status. Husband's employment situation could affect wife's participation decisions in two ways. According to the "added worker effect" hypothesis, wives, inactive in the labor market, decide to temporarily participate in order to compensate for the loss of income due to husband's unemployment (Kızılırmak 2005). In contrast, the "discouraged worker" effect suggests that women drop out of the labor force during periods of recession because expected returns to search are low: wages are depressed and the probability to finding employment is small (Psacharopoulos-Tzannatos 1992).

On the other hand, being married and having children negatively affects the labor force participation of women due to their housekeeping chores and childcare responsibilities. Maternity is one of the main factors that influence female participation rates. Especially, a childcare responsibility is more crucial who has children below seven age and school age children between ages of seven and fourteen (Dayıoğlu-Kasnakoğlu 1997). 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 (25 to 44 years) (OECD 2003). They rejoin only later in life, when their children are old enough to take care of themselves. Therefore, instead of the usual bell-shaped age participation profile observed for men, their interrupted careers give rise to an M-shaped pattern (Dayıoğlu-Kasnakoğlu 1997).

Table 10. Women Not in Labor Force by Marital Status and Age Group, Turkey (15 years old and over), (Thousand)

Age Group	1988				2008			
	Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed
15-19	1484	273	2	1	2183	252	2	0
20-24	351	1050	3	3	838	1108	11	2
25-29	78	1234	13	8	269	1829	24	7
30-34	24	1076	6	10	128	1749	27	13
35-39	18	981	10	19	88	1618	26	28
40-44	9	774	10	38	56	1488	36	48
45-49	4	652	5	58	43	1386	53	90
50-54	5	608	5	107	24	1197	48	142
55-59	9	529	13	149	25	923	37	192
60-64	6	384	8	195	12	691	22	251
65+	8	385	13	613	30	1136	37	1357

Source: TURKSTAT, Household Labor Force Survey Results (www.turkstat.gov.tr)

Note: It is accepted that the age of youths (15 to 24 years), child-bearing aged women (25 to 44 years) and older men and women (55 to 64 years)

Another reason for the low participation of women in the labor market in Turkey is that young boys are the second breadwinners, after the fathers, of the poor families in the urban areas. These boys, instead of mothers, work in the labor market (Bulutay-Tastı 2004). On the other hand, the male participation rate demonstrates different profiles; married men have the highest labor force participation rate (78.2 percent), divorced men have the second highest (68.2 percent), and widowed men have the lowest (22.4 percent) after single men (58 percent). All these figures support the idea that women are the secondary (supplementary) labor force in Turkey.

The participation rate of the widows is the lowest for both men and women. This may possibly be due to the fact that a high proportion of the widows are elderly and have reduced participation rates (Tansel 2001).

4.3.4. Cultural Norms Against Women

Cultural factors against women are also affect women's participation in market work. The most important cultural factor influencing women's position and participation to market work in Turkey is patriarchy (Gündüz-Smits 2006). Family pressure from husbands, parent and in-laws is an important constrains to employment faced by poorly educated women (SPO-World Bank 2009b). The head of the household and the main breadwinner is expected to be a man. On the other hand, within the framework of socio-cultural factors, that is gender-based division of

work and gender roles based on this division, women in Turkey, are considered homemakers who should take care of domestic duties and childcare and be responsible for the well being of other family members, including the elderly. According to Toksöz (2007), especially in case where the employment of unqualified women of low educational background is regarded as threat to the dominancy of male household heads as “breadwinners”, women and young girls are not allowed to work out of their homes. Despite considerable changes in the last few decades, there are deep underlying cultural beliefs about gender roles. These beliefs are especially strong among people living in rural areas and migrants to the cities who continue to preserve many of their traditional attitudes (Ecevit 2003).

5. Policies Affecting Female Labor Force Participation

Under the 9th Development plan which covers the 2007-2013 period, it has been developed an “Action Plan for Gender Equality” by Turkish State Planning Organization (SPO 2006) for provide more and better job opportunities for women. In this framework, three policies have been indentified (SPO-World Bank 2009b).

- *Creating job opportunities for first time job seekers for young women: Short term work regulation and programs to enhance labor demand for women.*

Interventions should aim at promoting formal employment for women with low levels of education, and especially for those transitioning from school to work. More flexible labor market regulation may reduce the barriers of businesses hiring women. For instance, the Government of Turkey has introduced recently a program that subsidizes employers’ social security contributions for new hired women for up to 5 years. Programs like this are likely to contribute to increase the rate of employment for women, especially in times of healthy economic performance.

- *Affordable childcare: Pre-school, Public and/or subsidized childcare.*

Many women could be encouraged to work by having access to affordable care for their children. This could be achieved by promoting early childhood development programs (ECD), such as preschool education and public/subsidized childcare programs (SPO-World Bank 2009b). The empirical evidence shows that childcare subsidies do increase female labor supply. Childcare subsidies reduce the relative price of formal childcare and, therefore, increase the relative return of market work (OECD 2003).

- *Sustaining investments on education: Increase attainment rates and invest in Vocational Education and Training (VET).*

Higher education attainment is associated with higher levels of female participation. Investment in VET are likely to prepare women, and especially young women, with the skills needed to quality for good jobs in the labor market. Turkish Government has scaled up of investment in VET for women though Turkish Employment Organization. International evidence indicates that investments on VET help women

to get formal jobs, and promotes gender equality in earnings and labor market opportunities.

By introducing positive action, creating job opportunities for first time job seekers for young women, affordable childcare and sustaining investments on education especially VET, the state may make a major contribution to the strengthening of the labor market position of Turkish women.

Turkish SPO stated that, in 8th development plan period (2001-2005) progress was not made in labor force participation and employment rates, which were lower than European Union averages. Such low rates are caused by insufficient participation of women to the labor force and employment. The female labor force participation and employment rates are around one third of the rate for men. On the other hand, labor force participation rate is expected to increase by 2.1 percentage points during the 9th Plan period (2007-2013) through raising the level of education, increasing employability by active labor market policies, and facilitating and encouraging entrance into the labor market. The main determinant of this increase is expected to be the increase in female force participation rate (SPO 2006).

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined the factors underlying female participation in Turkey. With in the context of globalization women's labor force participation and employment rates have increased all over the world whereas Turkey differs from most countries with decrease. Turkish labor market is characterized by high rates of population and labor force growth, declining rates of participation and exceptionally low levels of female participation in urban areas. Towards sustainable growth and development targets of Turkey, optimal resource usage is a necessity. In Turkey, almost one-half of the population is women, effective usage of women resource as labor force is important in respect to development targets. In addition to this, it is known that the role of women on the child care is also important for socio-economic development. So, women have an active role on Turkish economic development.

Turkey has experienced important structural and social changes that would be expected to facilitate women to seek jobs. In this sense several satisfactory progresses are:

- The social attitude toward working women have changed in recent years,
- Women are becoming more educated
- Women are getting married at a later age,
- Fertility rates are declining
- Micro finance applications are growing up.

After all educational attainment is on the rise, while fertility is on the decline, and other positive developments might impact female labor force participation positively in next years. It should not be forget to the importance of a sustainable and high level of economic activity in achieving higher female participation and employment.

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