

## FEMALE EMPLOYMENT AND CARE ECONOMY IN TURKEY

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines gender employment impact of expanding the early childhood care and preschool education (ECCPE) sector in Turkey. Underinvestment in social care thus takes its toll on the country's long-term economic potential through weakened labour force attachment, and diminished childhood development. This neglect of care economy projects reflects a gender bias in economic thinking as women are more represented in caring work. Investing in the care industries would generate increases in employment and add to growth, with a higher proportion going to women, as they would now be free to take up many of such jobs. It would also narrow the gender employment and earnings gaps. In addition, the government at various levels could start by eliminating gender bias in the laws; take necessary measures to establish, operate, and allocate funds for childcare facilities; come up with initiatives like reinstating and reviewing the laws mandating private sector employers to set up nurseries for both male and female staff and provide childcare services in the workplace.

**Key Words:** Care Economy, Women Empowerment, Female Employment, Gender Equality

JEL Codes: J13, J16, J21

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## TÜRKİYE’DE BAKIM EKONOMİSİ VE KADIN İSTİHDAMI

### ÖZET

Bu çalışmada Türkiye’de bebek yaştaki çocukların bakımı ve okul öncesi eğitim (ECCPE) sektörünün genişlemesinin cinsiyetlere göre istihdam üzerindeki etkisi incelenmiştir. Sosyal bakıma yapılan düşük yatırımlar, iş gücüne olan katılımını azaltmakta ve çocuk gelişimi yoluyla ülkenin uzun vadeli ekonomik potansiyeline zarar vermektedir. Bakım ekonomisi projeleri üzerinde yeterince durulmaması, kadınların bakım işlerinde daha fazla temsil edilmeleri nedeniyle ekonomik açıdan da bir cinsiyet ayrımcılığı yansıtmaktadır. Hâlbuki bakım sektörlerine yatırım yapmak, istihdamda artışa neden olacak ve büyümeye katkıda bulunacaktır. Ayrıca bu durumda daha fazla oranda kadın istihdama dâhil olacaktır. Aynı zamanda, cinsiyetçi istihdamı ve ücret farklılıklarını da azaltacaktır. Devlet birçok durumda yasalardaki cinsiyet eğilimlerini ortadan kaldırarak, çocuk bakım tesisleri için fon oluşturmak, işletmek ve tahsis etmek için gerekli önlemleri almak; özel sektör işverenlerini hem erkek hem de kadın personele yönelik kreş kurmaya ve iş yerinde çocuk bakım hizmetleri vermeye yönlendiren yasaları yeniden düzenleme ve gözden geçirme gibi girişimlerle ortaya çıkararak bu alanda yapılanmaya gidebilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Bakım Ekonomisi, Kadın Güçlendirme, Kadın İstihdamı, Cinsiyet Eşitliği

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Low participation of women in the labour force along with an unemployment rate that is high has become an important structural challenge facing the economy of Turkey, especially since the early 2000s. Coupled with this low participation in labour force by women in Turkey is the fact that the country has one of the lowest female labour force participation in the world. The employment rate in Turkey has remained low in spite the country's substantial economic growth over the last 30 years. The employment rate rests at 47.8 percent for the working-age (15–64) population, compared to 66.35 percent average in OECD countries in 2017. Underlying this low employment rate is the limited participation of women in the labour market. In 2017, the employment rate for women in Turkey in 2017 was 28.2 percent, whereas for men, it was 69.5 percent, which is on par with OECD and EU male averages. Among the factors identified to be behind the low employment rate of female in Turkey is the poor state of the country's social care infrastructure. Particularly in the early childhood care and preschool education in Turkey is very low compared to other OECD member countries.

Investment in infrastructure is generally taken to be physical infrastructure such as roads, bridges and telecommunications, which is durable and yields returns into the future. For many countries, this is a vital area funds are directed to. However, investment in the care sector also yields returns to the economy and society in the long run. This is why this form of expenditure is termed investment in social infrastructure or care economy. In spite of all these possible benefits, this form of expenditure is rarely considered as a suitable form of investment when policy makers are looking for effective forms of employment generation. What we see happening most of the time is that public expenditure on education, health, childcare and social care services are often casualties in budget deficit and reduction strategies.

This neglect of social infrastructure projects reflects a gender bias in economic thinking. It may also stem from the gender division of labour and gender employment segregation, with women being over represented in caring work, and men being over represented in construction. Male unemployment is

often seen to be a more urgent problem as men are assumed to be breadwinners, despite the fact that increasingly many multiple or dual person households rely on more than one income.

Therefore, there is a link between the availability of high quality, social care services that is affordable; and the alleviation of the constraints on female labour supply (Kimmel, 1995; Powell, 1997; Budig and England, 2001; Blau and Tekin, 2007; Temple and Reynolds, 2007;

Lefebvre and Merrigan, 2008; Ilkcaracan, 2012 and 2013). However, an expansion of the social care service sector, including early childcare and preschool education also comes with the potential of facilitating substantial demand side effect through the generation of jobs by rising employment demand directly in the early childcare and preschool education sector.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The relationship between the availability of high quality and affordable social care and the alleviation of the constraints on the supply of female labour force has been acknowledged in many studies. Early childhood care and preschool education, a part of social care, has been examined from the angle of child development. Apart from the positive effect it would have on female labour supply and development of the child, an expansion of the social care service sector also carries with it the potentials for employment generation, particularly for female workers, therefore supporting the integration of women in the labour market on both the demand and the supply side.

There are different approaches used to assess the economic outcomes of social care expansion. Close examination of the alleviation of the constraints on female labour supply and boosting the participation of female in the labour force is among the most common approach in use. For instance, in a comparative study by Del Boca and Sauer (2005) states that dynamic utility maximization model of labour force participation to estimate the participation decisions of married women are used in France, Italy, and Spain. They find that if less-educated women in Italy and Spain were to face the same institutional environment as is found in France in terms of work-life balance, including childcare provisioning for

children under age 3, their labour force participation would increase by 17.5 and 29.4 percentage points, respectively.

Apps and Rees (2005) construct a model for the supply of labour to reveal that access to childcare that is affordable rather than conditional cash transfers for the benefits of a child enhances the participation of women in labour force in a significant way. The authors go ahead to draw our attention to the fact that countries like Germany, Italy, and Spain with low fertility rate also have the lowest female participation rate. Their paper thus sets out to explore how this situation could be explained by public policy, taxation in particular and the child support system

In another empirical application, Apps and Rees (2004) analyse time-use data for Australia, the UK and Germany to explain how couples – women in particular – when public provision of care services are unavailable turn to child care and domestic work, leading to decline in female participation in the labour force

Another approach on the supply side to assessing the economic outcomes of expanding child-care and preschool services involves the identification of the long-term implication via the human capital enhancement role of early childhood support. This approach highlights the critical role played by early childhood care and education services in the physical, social, and mental development of children, preparing them to succeed in school and adult life. Consequently, investment in early childhood care services has potential long-term growth effects through improved quality of human capital that can be identified through the internal rates of return. A series of papers by Heckman and others (2010) find that preschool education yields the highest returns (i.e., formalized in terms of higher future earnings) as compared to investments in later stages of schooling. According to Conti and Heckman (2012), from a purely economic standpoint, the highest return to a unit dollar invested is at the beginning of the lifecycle since it builds the base that makes later returns possible. These studies also emphasize that higher potential earnings are linked to higher intergenerational educational and income mobility.

Some other studies have approached the issue public investment in social services within a macroeconomic framework with emphasis on the labour demand side. For example, Hansen and Andersen (2014), explore the effects of public investment in child-care services on growth and employment creation using this model. Their study was based on a macro simulation of countries in the Eurozone and the UK. They find that “a gendered investment plan” designed to expand public child-care services would lead to 2.4% GDP growth and create 4.8 million new jobs in five years, and that more than half of these jobs (2.7 million) would be held by women. Similarly, a study on Austria by AK Europa (2013) shows that investment in the provision of childcare could not only eliminate current deficits in terms of available places and quality but also generate considerable employment and budgetary effects.

With an initial financing of, on average, 200 million euros per year by the central and local governments over five years, targeting creation of 35,000 new places for small children (under 3 years old) and better operating hours for 70,000 existing kindergarten places, the study estimates that 14,000 new jobs in child care would be created, as well as another 2,300 in other sectors due to enhanced demand. Furthermore, it is estimated that 14,000 to 28,000 parents who could not participate in the labour market due to their care responsibilities could find employment.

The investment of public funds in social infrastructure makes economic sense. It not only generates employment, but also contributes to gender equality and human development (Antonopoulos, 2008). The provision of ECCPE care service not only directly creates jobs in the care industry; it also frees women to take up jobs, women who could not because they had to stay home to look after their little children. This is so because, collective mode of providing care in nurseries is usually more productive compared to individualized care provided in the family. Collective care participation enables more women to participate in the labour force, women who in their absence are likely to be the ones at home caring for the children

Public investment in care economy also contributes to solving the care deficit that comes up as a result of more women taking up paid employment as men have not increased their contributions to domestic work or caring they do on the home front to make any sufficient difference. Additionally, due to urban-rural migration, families are living further apart geographically from relatives and grandparents who may help them look after their children while the mothers are at work.

Furthermore, if ECCPE centers are well funded and regulated, they can contribute to the well-being of children by increasing their opportunities to learn along with their social development and integration. There is also the fact that women are more likely than men to take up jobs created in care services due to the continued industrial and occupational segregation. Women are also more likely to be prepared to take up jobs of any kind so long as quality and affordable care services are available to reduce the unpaid care responsibilities which seem to be one of the major limitations to the greater participation of women in paid employment.

The degree to which investment in the care service sector eventually reduces gender inequality will depend on the extent to which men are encouraged to take up jobs in the care sector which improved wage condition may encourage. In any case, the initial effect of investing in social infrastructure would help in narrowing the gender employment gap as well as the gender gap in time devoted to unpaid care.

Public investment in care economy also has the potential of narrowing social divisions as it allows women who earn little or no wages enter the labour force or increases the number of hours they spend working and by extension, their incomes. Without such provisions, low paid women are discouraged by the high cost of private care provision that higher earning women may be able to afford. The resulting increase in the lifetime earnings of women, and their pension entitlements would go a long way to reduce the gender gap in poverty rates, another contribution towards narrowing the economic inequality associated with gender.

Public provision of high quality childcare can also narrow social divisions if they result in children from different backgrounds being cared for together. These arguments have been made by feminist

economists, organisations such as the Women’s Budget Group in their Feminist F plan for recovery and supporters of the Purple Economy who also recognise that society depends on care as “an indispensable component of human well-being” so the public provision of social infrastructure is crucial for economic development.

The study also shows that taxes from the new employment opportunities and the savings in unemployment benefits would create public revenue that would exceed the costs of the initiative beginning in the fifth year of the initial investment and continuing thereafter. The authors argue that the perception of social policy as investment that pays off might change the debate on austerity measures and put more emphasis on the productive role of social policy.

Warner and Liu (2006) approach this issue from the perspective of demand that would be triggered by childcare multipliers. Their findings reveal that only hospitals have larger employment and output multipliers than child-care centres. They also attribute the short-term output and employment enhancing effects of childcare expansion in the regional economy to its relatively large output and employment multipliers. The conclusion of the authors is that childcare compares favourably as an economic development goal. This paper contributes to the literature on care economy and female employment by examining the impact of early childhood care education and preschool program on women’s employment, gender equality through job allocation. It points to the potential roles of public investment in social care services as an inclusive growth policy, which in turn could be an effective solution to this structural problem.

### **3. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CARE ECONOMY AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN TURKEY**

The economy of Turkey as earlier stated has one of the lowest labour force participation rates in the world. As of 2017, statistics from TUIK shows that this number stood at 50%. The participation rate of male and female participation rates were declining up until the end 2000s (Table 1), although at extremely different levels of participation, usually due to different dynamics.



**Table 1. Labor Force Participation Rates by Gender, Turkey (2008-2016)**

Year	Total %	Men %	Women%
2008	46.2	74.7	26.7
2009	47.1	75.3	28.4
2010	48.1	75.5	30.2
2011	49.3	76.3	31.5
2012	49.4	75.6	32.2
2013	50.3	75.6	32.2
2014	50.5	75.7	32.2
2015	51.6	71.6	31.5
2016	52.4	77.5	36.6

Source: TURKSTAT ([www.turkstat.gov.tr](http://www.turkstat.gov.tr))

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

While the declining trend in the male participation rate may be attributed to an increased number of years of schooling, the declining trend in the female participation rate was driven to a large extent by rural urban migration. In addition, this has been seen the transformation of women from unpaid family farm workers to urban homemakers, poor education and the patriarchal system which still exist in the societies. On the other hand, society's expectation of men to be the bread winners and women as mothers and housewives limits their work (İlkkaracan, 2012). As of 2016, the number has increased to over 30%. This ranks Turkey with the lowest female participation rate among OECD (in Table it is 57.9% versus a 72.7% OECD average female labour force participation rate in 2017 for the 15–64 age group) countries and bottom 15 countries globally with the lowest female participation rate in labour force

One of the main features of Turkey in terms of gender patterns in employment is the high share of women employed in agriculture as unpaid family workers. In 2017, 31.2% of all employed women were working in the agricultural sector, on an unpaid basis. In comparison to their male counterparts engaged in the same sector, only 3.6% of male employment is in unpaid family work in agriculture (OECD, 2017).

Statistics from TUIK 2015 reveals that there were 2.48 million discouraged workers, of which 1.5 million were women. Together with the unofficially unemployed (2.85 million), this brings that number to 5.3 million people who are ready to start a job if offered one. The unemployment rate including discouraged workers is 17.1% of the 25.9 million in total employment. Finally, of the 20 million adult women who remain outside of the labour market, as many as 11.6 million report engagement in full-time homemaking as the reason for not seeking employment outside their homes. This latter group can be interpreted as a substantial potential labour force if jobs were available and domestic labour constraints on labour supply were eliminated.

#### **4. EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND PRESCHOOL EDUCATION SERVICES IN TURKEY**

In Turkey, no legal provision stipulating the establishment of ECCPE institutions by public authorities is in place. The Turkish legal framework concerning ECCPE does not define access to these services as a right for children or parents. As a result, the government is not under any legal obligation to provide these services. The only legal requirement that exist is the one that concerns the obligation of private and public enterprises to provide access to free nurseries for the children of their employees, based on certain criteria. *According to Labour Article 74 of Labor Law No.4857:*

“Female employees shall be allowed a total of one and a half hour nursing leave in order to enable them to feed their children below the age of one. The employee shall decide herself at what times and in how many installments she will use this leave. The length of the nursing leave shall be treated as part of the daily working time.”

Therefore, the employers employing between 100-150 women must provide a lactation room and for companies with over 150 women workers it is compulsory for employer to establish also a day-care center for 0-6 age groups. Turkish government should encourage and help employers to provide some form of childcare support to women workers. Childcare provision needs to balance the needs of children and the needs of working parents. Therefore, this will help women to be active in the labour market.

According to the 2012 industry and service statistics by the Turkish Statistical Institute, only 0.5% out of a total of 2.6 million workplaces employ more than 100 people. As for the day care centres and kindergartens operated by public agencies and enterprises, their numbers have been declining since the early 2000s. According to Ministry of Employment data, the number of such day-care centres and kindergartens has dropped from 419 in 2004 to 148 in 2010.

Since there is no legislation in Turkey that defines access to ECCPE services as a right for either parents or children, parents employed in large workplaces being the exception as defined under the above referenced Labour Law 4857, Article 74, the current supply of services is very limited. Tables 2–5 show the situation in Turkey with respect to enrolment by age group and types of ECCPE institution. To begin with, there are no official statistics for the enrolment of children under age 3 in ECCPE service institutions (Table 2); an indication of the lack of institutional services aimed at this age group.

Table 2. Enrolment Rate in Preschool Education by Age Group 2007 – 2015

Year	0–35 Months			36–48 Months			48–60 Months			60–72 Months		
	Age Population	No of students	Enrolment rate	Age Population	No of students	Enrolment rate	Age Population	No of students	Enrolment rate	Age Population	No of students	Enrolment rate
2010 - 2011	3,666,151	-		1,273,837	53,766	4.2	1,238,735	237,292	19.2	1,225,563	824,760	67.3
2011 - 2012	3,655,783	-		1,265,286	58,330	4.6	1,278,755	245,865	19.2	1,244,302	865,361	69.5
2012 - 2013	3,671,579	-		1,245,342	91,443	7.3	1,282,036	456,363	35.6	1,283,007	530,127	41.3
2013 - 2014	3,717,426	-		1,240,578	96,145	7.8	1,248,411	402,053	32.2	1,290,772	561,297	43.5
2014 - 2015	3,821,735	-		1,229,654	111,970	9.1	1,243,144	402,326	32.4	1,250,908	642,365	51.4

Source: Compiled from MoE statistics and TurkStat population statistics.

**Table 3. Number of Pupils Enrolled in Day-Care and Preschool Education by Institution Types, 2010 – 2015**

Type of institution	2010–2011	2011–2012	2012–2013	2013–2014	2014–2015
<b>Kindergarten total</b>	224,31	256,378	275,777	305,914	369,173
<b>Public kindergarten</b>	184,55	208,597	219,536	239,217	280,256
<b>Private kindergarten</b>	39,769	47,781	56,241	66,697	88,917
<b>Day-care Centers and Nurseries Total</b>	46,724	48,575	51,813	49,275	58,062
<b>Public Day-care Centers and Nurseries</b>	6,776	7,674	7,857	6,459	8,717
<b>Private Day-care Centers and Nurseries</b>	39,948	40,901	43,956	42,816	49,345
<b>Total Private Institutions</b>	79,717	88,682	100,197	109,513	138,262
<b>Total Public Institutions</b>	191,32	216,271	227,393	245,676	288,973

The rate of enrolment for children age 3 and 4 seems to be on the increase as indicated in table 2. Among those of this age, this rate has risen from 4.2% in 2010–2011 to 9.1% in 2014–2015, and among that age 4, from 19% to 32.4% (Table 2). In spite of this upward trend, the number of preschool enrolment remains quite low by international standards and by the targets of a net preschool enrolment rate of 70% set by the Ministry of Education in its 2010–2014 Strategic Plan; and, more recently, the 70% target enrolment rate for the 4 to 5year old age group by 2018 stated in the 10th Development Plan for Turkey (2013). The number of institutions and students' enrolment in the last five years (Tables 3) reveals that both public and private kindergartens and day-care centers have roughly doubled and pupils have grown in number. When number of pupils enrolled to preschool education and in day-care services are compared with Germany, Sweden, United Kingdom, Greece and Spain; Turkey is far behind of all these countries. In Germany, the number of pupils enrolled in preschool education is 783.500 while it was 156.800 in Sweden, 257.900 in United Kingdom, 148.700 in Greece and 444.300 in Spain. Therefore, Turkey should aim to increase the

number of pupils enrolled to preschool education, which will also provide opportunity to women to be in the labour market.

According to the 2013 edition of the Turkey Population and Health Survey (2013), one-fourth of working urban women and one-third of working rural women who have young children of preschool age state that they assume all child-care responsibilities on their own. This might suggest that they are employed at home or part-time so as to reconcile work with childcare. Out of the number of employed urban women with young children, according to the report, just 18.3% benefit from institutional child care and 7.3% employ babysitters. The rates get even lower for working rural women: 4.3% have sent their children to institutional childcare and 3% to day care centers. The rates of access to institutional child care or private babysitters vary largely by education level. Only 2.6% of employed women who graduated from primary school benefit from institutional child care while 1.4% of them employ babysitters. As for graduates of secondary school 5.5% have access to institutional childcare and 5.2% to babysitters. With employed women with at least a high school education while these rates reach Forty percent of primary school graduates and 38% of junior high school graduates state that they assume all child-care responsibilities on their own; however, the percentage drops to 12.6% among women with at least a high school education.

**Table 4. Individuals who look after children of employed mothers**

<b>Properties</b>	<b>Herself</b>	<b>Husband</b>	<b>Babysitter</b>	<b>Day Care,Nursery or Kindergarten</b>
<b>Urban</b>	24.6	2.2	7.3	18.3
<b>Rural</b>	34.3	1.4	3.0	4.3
<b>No education</b>	39.7	2.6	0.9	0.5
<b>Primary education</b>	40.0	2.8	1.4	2.6
<b>Secondary education</b>	38.0	0.4	5.2	5.5
<b>Higher school education and above</b>	12.6	1.8	10.9	28.5

Source: Turkey Demographic and Health Survey 2013, Hacettepe University, Institute for Population Studies. Presently, Turkey has the lowest access rate to ECCPE services when compared to OECD countries. Turkey is the only OECD country that has no official data on preschool enrolment of children less than 3 years of

age. The OECD enrolment average age for children under the age of 3 is above 30% while we do not know the estimate for Turkey. For majority of OECD countries, the enrolment rate for 3-year-old preschool children is above 60%. For Mexico, the rate is 40% while France, and Denmark are nearing 100%. Preschool enrolment for children of 4 years onward among most OECD countries is almost 100%. Hence, Turkey is still behind in virtually every age group. The reason for this is not far-fetched. In Turkey, because of the cultural norms, the elder member of the families like grandmothers tends to look after the children. As seen in the table above, only 24% of workingwomen are looking after their children. Children in Turkey usually begin their preschool education at 5. As a result, when viewed comparatively from international perspective, Turkish ECCPE services are at a level that can best be described as underdeveloped.

## **5. CHALLENGES FACED BY TURKISH WOMEN IN THE CARE ECONOMY**

### **5.1. Feminization of Family Care**

The feminization of family care in Turkey prevents women from entering the workforce. Traditionally, women's role is to remain at home and care for the family. The role of women as mothers and housewives limits their work outside of the home. According to the societies attitude towards women as Winkler (2016) states is "husband should be the breadwinner and the wife should be the homemaker". As a result, the participation of women especially in rural areas in the country's labour market is among the lowest in the world.

### **5.2. Poor Education**

Education plays an important role in determining female participation in the workforce in Turkey. Consequently, high level of female education translates to a higher number of women in the workforce. Statistics reveal that higher educational qualification increase the chances of employment from about 3% for primary school graduates to about 73% for tertiary education graduates. Despite the fact that there has been an increase in the literacy rate of Turkish women, a lot of them still do not possess higher than a

primary school education. This tends to have an effect on their overall participation in the workforce and puts them at a losing end when compared to the men.

As at 2016, 9% of women were illiterate compared to only 4% for men. While only about 33% of the female population had higher than a primary school qualification, compared to 50% for men. Education enhances female self-esteem; and increases their participation rate in the workforce (Yazıcı, 2012).

### **5.3. Social Policies**

Social policies set by the state impact how women are viewed in society and result in structural gender differences. When women are expected to be the main caregivers of society, they are unable to branch away from their families and pursue a long-term career path. This can also be seen in gender bias in the laws. Laws restricting the access of women in the labour market under certain conditions like pregnancy, and night work with the aim of protecting them from seemingly dangerous working conditions may end up being discriminatory towards women.

Additionally, the social political policies that push women into domestic sphere is a major issue women face in care economy like “Return to the Family” project (Yazıcı, 2012). This project aims to bring back home children who were separated from their families due to economic deprivation either by providing cash transfers to the family or by providing cash benefits for the home care of the elderly and disabled. It suggests a shift in priority away from public institutional care towards an increase in home care provision. Such policy measures serve to reinforce the notion of placing the women in the home.



## **6. SOME MEASURES THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE TAKING**

### **6.1. The Laws**

Laws that grant long term maternity leave or rulings that oblige businesses to provide childcare services only for female employees, may hinder demand for female employment. If fathers share an equal responsibility for the care of the newly born, parental leave will not be an occasion to discriminating against women but will apply to all employees- men and women. Gender bias in the law must be eliminated. Restriction on women's access to labour market under certain conditions such as pregnancy and night work with an aim to protect women from "dangerous" working conditions must be eliminated.

### **6.2. Expanding Childcare Care Facilities**

The government must actively take necessary measures to establish, operate, and allocate funds for childcare facilities. This is becoming all the more pressing because of urban migration patterns and changes to nuclear family types. The policy measures that move away from public institutional care towards an increase in home care provision must be revised to reduce the dependency on women's unpaid labour within the household for care giving. On the other hand, the government can facilitate investments in childcare centres and expand the provision of such services by providing incentives to private sector.

### **6.3. Improving the Quality of Education**

The importance of education in women's economic independence and emancipation cannot be overemphasized. Education affects virtually every aspect of human endeavours. When girls/women get education, they are better able to take care of themselves hence child and maternal mortality rates are reduced. An educated woman will also provide equal access to education for her children irrespective of gender and their production is higher. Put all these together and the result is an increase in economic growth and better equitable distribution of resources. Education greatly increases the economic choice of women and such women hardly succumb to society's patriarchal structure that confines them to unpaid jobs. As much as the country has recorded some gains in this aspect through various campaigns targeted at getting

girls to school, campaigns such as the “Let’s go to school girls” which has seen over 222, 800 girls in school, and the “campaign to support National Education” that has itself reached over 4 million adults within 4 years - mainly women from rural areas as well as girls who were unable to attend school, it is important that the government does not relax now. This is the time to set up a monitoring committee to ensure that these programs are properly implemented and girls remain in school (Acar et al, 2003).

#### **6.4. Sectorial Priorities but not at the Expense of Vertical Segregation**

In spite of growing number of women in the service sector, males continue to be disproportionately represented in higher end positions while women are employed in lower paid jobs. While it is important to target certain sectors and occupations that seem friendly to female, jobs such as customer service officers at shopping malls that offers women what seem like a secure and friendly environment in which to work in public, segregating the labour market into occupations based on judgement about whether a type of job is suitable for a particular gender or not (vertical segregation) may reinforce the gender stereotypes and women working in the service sector may be marooned at the bottom of the professional ladder.

#### **6.5. Better Inclusion into the Social Security System**

While efforts made by the government towards enhancing education, considering the possible implication for women participation in the long term for the labour market, are commendable, the government can also work on formalizing women in paid and unpaid employment. The vastness of the informal economy and the strong rural/urban market divide is responsible for this. The government could consider a better and more inclusive benefit system for women in the informal sector many of whom are unpaid until the informal economy problem is tackled, and the existing imbalances are eliminated. Additionally, organizations should be made to provide insurance cover for their workers.

## **6.6. Better Representation of Women in the Labour Force**

As mentioned earlier, providing employment incentives schemes for women, especially in rural areas can help to enhance women's participation in the economy. The country needs to embrace innovations that promote women's economic resilience; innovations that will help women overcome the barriers of livelihood and promote a more equitable income flow of financial and non-financial benefits.

For instance, improvements in women's employment in the private sector could be achieved by remedying the shortfall between the skills taught at school and those required in the labour market, guaranteeing equal access to quality learning, fostering women's education and training in science and technology universities and similar centres, introducing on-going learning programmes for women and encouraging private enterprises to launch training programmes for women graduates, encouraging the private sector and foundations to invest in programmes and the improvement of skills to favour women's enterprises and career opportunities for women and girls, and supporting recruitment, retention and progress of women and girls in the fields of science, technology and innovation by means of transparent criteria<sup>1</sup>. The main challenge is how to increase the number of women in jobs that require technical and other higher skills, jobs that attract higher wages and expand future opportunities by providing women with access to quality education, giving them the opportunities to balance and working and family life

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<sup>1</sup> Ecevit, Yıldız, "Women's Labor and Social Security", içinde Bridging the Gender Gap in Turkey: A Milestone towards Faster Socio-economic Development and Poverty Reduction, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit Europe and Central Asia Region, Report by World Bank, 13 Eylül 2003, pp.73-101.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

This article has taken a look at Turkish women employment and the childcare economy in Turkey. The financial freedom of the Turkish woman continues to be one of the most challenging issue facing the country. The Turkish workforce is known to contain high population rates and workforce growth, however, the rate of participation of women is very low and keeps reducing at an alarming rate. Female participation in the work force is put at about 30% of the entire workforce, while 40% of this represents unpaid female workers who work in the agricultural sector. The major reason for the low number of women in the workforce is attributed to the feminization of child and household care.

Turkey has the lowest rate when it comes to access to infant childhood care and preschool education within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Turkey also ranks bottom in female workforce participation (33.6%) amongst OECD countries. Most Turkish women view letting go off paid employment as an easy cost-benefit analysis; the potential gains from being gainfully employed in terms of salaries and income is a lot lower than the benefits of proper household and child care. This can partly be attributed to the inadequate investment by the Turkish government in ECCPE services. The government invests a meagre 0.18% of GDP on infant care and pre-school education, this figure is low when compared to the 0.8% average of other OCED countries. Inadequate investment in this sector has long term and far reaching effects in terms of the potential quality of the workforce and the education of the child down the line.

For the government in Turkey, investments are largely geared towards building amenities like bridges, roads and telecommunications, which are tangible and yield significant returns on investments. However, investing in infant childcare and preschool education has the same capability of yielding equal returns on investment. For example, investments in the infant childcare economy would create more employment and

significantly add to the growth of the economy, with a larger number of these employment opportunities attached to women, as they would now have found the time to take up such offers.

Another advantage that is associated with investment in the childcare economy is its reduction of gender bias in the workforce, by consequently reducing the employment gap in the workforce. Salaries and working environment in the childcare sector would have to undergo major improvements if we are to record successful investments in this area. As such, these investments would require specialized training and education, which would benefit both the employees and the children they would be taking care of. Being able to achieve proper childcare is a gender challenge in its own right, since the care industry is predominantly viewed as a female territory.

Despite all the benefit, a country stands to gain from investing in infant childcare and preschool education, government investment in this sector is rarely considered to be a very good investment when government officials are seeking ways to create employment. What occurs in most cases are reduced investments in healthcare, educations, and social care services. Neglecting this sector of the economy shows a gender bias in the thinking of a country as women are mainly represented in these sectors unlike the men who dominate the construction field. As a result, male unemployment is often viewed as requiring urgent attention than their female counterparts, this is usually attributed to the fact the men are seen as the breadwinner of the family. This is an unfair and biased assumption as many households these days rely on more than one source of income.

There are several challenges that Turkish women face, which prevents them from taking part in the childcare economy, these challenges, include; poor education, Turkey's patriarchal society, low wages, and a lack of structural capacity to manage childcare. However, some laws and government policies have been established to promote the growth of female participation in the work force, these laws have not been efficiently enforced. There are a lot of differences in the ways these laws are implemented in different areas

of the country. There is still a lot of work to do in terms of data gathering and monitoring the development that is being made by a newly introduced policy to find out how effective it is with the sole aim of elevating the level of women and plan further on how such policies can be improved upon.

Close to 50% of the Turkish population are women and as such, proper utilization of women resources in the workforce is very essential with respect to attaining developmental aims and goals. As such, the government at all levels should be by removing the gender bias laws; take adequate steps to create, run, and disburse funds for infant childcare amenities; the government should also come up with ideas like reviewing and reintroducing laws that require private employers to establish nurseries for both female and male workers and make provision for childcare services in their offices.

It is true that expenses on childcare are a lifetime investment, but it should be affordable for all. This will go a long way to help many mothers seek and accept employment, and get actively involved in the labor market. Conversely, high demand for childcare services will also provide more employment opportunities for women. Improving and making the childcare service sector affordable will therefore have a ripple positive effect on not only the women who would gain in both ways; it will also improve the economy by providing more productive workforce. This improvement can only be achieved by active investment in the childcare service sector by government and cooperate bodies.

## **ÖZET**

Bu çalışmada Türkiye'de bebek yaştaki çocukların bakımı ve okul öncesi eğitim (ECCPE) sektörünün genişlemesinin cinsiyetlere göre istihdam üzerindeki etkisi incelenmiştir. Sosyal bakıma yapılan düşük yatırımlar, iş gücüne olan katılımını azaltmakta ve çocuk gelişimi yoluyla ülkenin uzun vadeli ekonomik potansiyeline zarar vermektedir. Bakım ekonomisi projeleri üzerinde yeterince durulmaması, kadınların bakım işlerinde daha fazla temsil edilmeleri nedeniyle ekonomik açıdan da bir cinsiyet ayrımcılığı yansıtmaktadır. Türkiye için yatırım genellikle dayanıklı ve getiri sağlayan yollar, köprüler ve telekomünikasyon gibi fiziki altyapının inşasına yöneliktir. Bakım ekonomisine yatırım yapmak da getiri sağlayabilir. Örneğin, bakım sektörlerine -çocuk bakımı ve yaşlı bakımı gibi- yatırım yapmak, istihdamda artışı sağlayarak, ekonomik büyümeye katkıda bulunacak ve daha fazla oranda kadının iş gücü piyasasına girmesine olanak sağlayacaktır. Bakım ekonomisine yatırım yapmanın getirdiği bir diğer fayda ise cinsiyetler arası istihdam ayrımcılığını azaltarak toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğini teşvik edecektir. Böyle bir yatırım başarılı olduğu durumda bakım endüstrisindeki ücretler ve çalışma koşullarının önemli ölçüde iyileştirilmesi gerekecektir. Bu bakımdan, bakım ekonomisine olan yatırım sadece işçilere değil, aynı zamanda eğitim ve profesyonelleşmeyi gerektireceği için bakım yaptıkları kişilere de fayda sağlayacaktır. Yüksek kaliteli bakımın sağlanması başlı başına ülkemiz için hala toplumsal cinsiyet meselesidir. Bunun nedeni ise kadınların bakım alan kesimde önemli bir paya sahip olmasıdır. Bu yatırımların kadınlara olan en büyük artışı ise daha fazla oranda istihdama dahil olmalarını sağlamasıdır. Aynı zamanda, cinsiyetçi istihdamı ve ücret farklılıklarını da azaltacaktır. Devlet birçok durumda yasalardaki cinsiyet eğilimlerini ortadan kaldırarak, çocuk bakım tesisleri için fon oluşturmak, işletmek ve tahsis etmek için gerekli önlemleri almak; özel sektör işverenlerini hem erkek hem de kadın personele yönelik kreş kurmaya ve iş yerinde çocuk bakım hizmetleri vermeye yönlendiren yasaları yeniden düzenleme ve gözden geçirme gibi girişimlerle ortaya çıkararak bu alanda yapılanmaya gidebilir.

Türkiye'de nüfusun yaklaşık yarısının kadın olduğu düşünülürken, iş gücündeki kadın kaynağının etkin kullanımı ekonomik kalkınma hedeflerinin karşılanması açısından oldukça önemlidir. Kadınların bakım ekonomisine katılmalarını engelleyen zorluklardan bazıları düşük ücretler, yetersiz eğitim, ataerkil ve ananevi gelenekler, çocuk bakımı için kurumsal kapasite eksikliğidir ve ülkenin özellikle de kadınlar açısından eksikliklerini yansıtmaktadır. Kadınların iş gücüne katılımını arttırmak ve daha çok kadını istihdam piyasasına teşvik etmek için bazı yasa ve politikalar uygulamaya konulmuş olmasına rağmen, bu yasaların birçoğu uygulanmamış ve takip edilmemiştir. Ülkenin farklı bölgelerinde bu yasaların uygulanmasında da tutarsızlıklar bulunmaktadır. Devletin doğru verileri toplamak için çaba göstermesi gerekmektedir. Böylece şu ana kadar kaydedilen ilerlemenin düzgün bir şekilde izlenmesi ve kadınların statüsünün iyileştirilmesi amacıyla ne kadar etkili olduğu ve hedeflerin nasıl karşılanacağını stratejik olarak belirleyen eylem planlarının hazırlanması oldukça önemlidir.



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