

GENDER EQUALITY IN TURKEY: ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK

Introduction

Fundamental human rights in Turkey are deteriorating, with women bearing the brunt of the impact. Every day, the situation worsens, with gender discrimination and violence on the rise, as well as women's representation in judicial bodies.

The Turkish legal system has struggled to achieve gender equality from the Republic's inception. Throughout the Kemalist period, a state feminism arose, which tied women's emancipation to adherence to the political movement's ideas. In 1935, Turkish women were granted political rights, including the right to vote, and their exclusion from public life was ended by encouraging their participation in public life, a path that was followed by other forms of state feminism, particularly those that emerged a few decades later in Latin America. Nonetheless, the changes to the Civil Code made during this time period, like those made in other coeval legal systems around the world, rebuilt the patriarchal family structure that characterized the Ottoman Empire.

Despite significant legal and constitutional reforms enacted by internal and foreign pressures, Islamic populism has surpassed Kemalist populism, particularly since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Gender equality is jeopardized by attempts to restrict women inside the constraints of the family system, a tendency that Islamic feminism opposes. The provisions of the 2004 Penal Code and the 2012 Law on the Protection of the Family and the Prevention of Violence against Women, both of which reflect and implement important achievements in the battle against gender-based violence as family-protection measures, demonstrate this.

Gender Inequality Rates in Politics, Health and Education

According to the "Global Gender Inequality Report 2021" published by the World Economic Forum, the political gender gap is still increasing in several big populous nations, like Turkey, Egypt and Indonesia. The research stated that the average rate of women

parliamentarians in Turkey is 26.1 percent, while the percentage of women ministers is 22.6 percent.

Gender discrimination in education and health has nearly closed, according to the study, despite data suggesting modest progress in gender equality. According to the research, which highlights the fact that 37 nations, including in Turkey, have achieved global gender equality in education, global disparity in education is expected to be closed in 14.2 years. In the realm of health, it was stated that gender discrimination is on the decline and that health disparities had been reduced by 95%.

The Place of Women in the Professions of the Future

According to "Global Gender Inequality 2021," women have a lower employment rate than males in fast-growing industries known as "vocations of tomorrow." Cloud computing technology employs 14% of women, engineering employs 20%, while data and artificial intelligence technologies employ 32% of women. According to the research, there has only been a small improvement in the economic gender gap since 2020, and closing the gap will take 267.6 years. Despite the fact that the number of women working in occupations that demand skills and knowledge continues to rise, the study notes that only a small percentage of women work in management roles globally. The Covid-19 pandemic has a greater impact on women than on males in Turkey, based on research data from the International Labor Organization. According to the available statistics, males lost 3.9 percent of their employment during the pandemic, while women lost 5% of their jobs.

What has the Pandemic's Impact been on Women's Economic Participation in Turkey?

In the 2021 Global Gender Inequality Report, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on economic gender imbalance is underlined. While the pandemic affects both men and women, research suggests that women are damaged more severely through a variety of

mechanisms. For starters, because women were more likely to work in industries like tourism or hospitality, affected by lockdown and social isolation measures, they had higher unemployment rates and had a harder difficulty reentering the economy.

Of course, the virus does not particularly target women, but it does have a greater impact on some sectors of the economy. Women are particularly vulnerable to the disruption produced by the pandemic in Turkey due to lockdowns and redundancies.

In Turkey women's occupations are 19 percent more vulnerable than men. Women are over-represented in three of the four most in-declining sectors of the economy: lodging and food services (18.6%), industry (21.1%), and services such as arts, leisure, and public administration (21.1%). (54.5 percent). Women's employment and access to the labor market, however, are subject to different labor market dynamics and views. Women were also disproportionately represented in COVID-19-affected industries.

The pandemic hasn't made conditions any better. According to a research by the United Nations' International Labor Organization (ILO), women in Turkey were more likely to lose their jobs during the crisis, in part because they are disproportionately represented in businesses affected by lockdowns. During lockdowns, women bore a disproportionate part of the responsibility of additional housework and childcare, resulting to increased stress and decreased productivity.

As jobs became available again, women were being employed at a slower pace than males. As a result, women had to leave the workforce at a higher rate than males. The overall workforce fell by 1 million 406 thousand in the past year, from 32 million 477 thousand to 31 million 71 thousand, according to TUIK data. A total of 4.3 percent of the workforce was lost. With a bigger contraction in the female workforce, the inclination to exit from the labor force is realized. In November 2019, there were a total of 10 million 596 thousand women working, with 1 million 755 thousand jobless and 8 million 639 thousand employed (TUIK, 2021).

Since Covid-19, 867 thousand women have left the labor, bringing the total number of women in the working to 9 million 729 thousand. The female workforce decreased by 8.2 percent. The male workforce fell by 538 thousand in a year, from 21 million 881 thousand in November 2019 to 21

million 343 thousand in November 2020. The overall workforce shrank by 5.1 percent last year, while the male workforce shrank by 2.5 percent and the female workforce shrank by 8.2 percent. According to TUIK (2021), women withdraw from the labor at a rate of 4.3 percent of overall employment losses owing to the pandemic, while males leave at a rate of 2.8 percent.

Women's absence from the employment has pushed down the labor force participation rate, which is already low when compared to men. Women who lost their employment and dropped out of the workforce as a result of the pandemic either gave up seeking for work or became unable to work owing to reduced working hours or a halt in production. This has led millions of women to leave and/or withdraw from the labor, with women leaving and/or withdrawing from employment at a higher rate than males, since the pandemic increased the amount of time women spend at home.

Political Gender Gap Growing in Turkey

Turkish women in political positions have even greater constraints in order to avoid being labeled as undesirable in public spaces. Women in politics have the ability to play a critical role in allowing other women to enter the public sphere and participate in political and social issues. Women in politics are always at danger of failing to meet role expectations or losing their good name. The fact that most of these job expectations are based on unspoken norms that are difficult to point to and much more difficult to modify adds to the complexity of the situation. The general norm is that the earlier a country gives women the right to vote, the greater their political representation will be in the future. In Turkey, the existing government is trying to decrease significance of the Law, which granted women in Turkey the right to vote in municipal elections from 1930 and national elections from 1934. Turkish women, on the other hand, continue to be underrepresented in politics.

Female participation in Turkey's four major political parties with seats in the Grand National Assembly varies by area and by party, with some regions experiencing a rise and others seeing no change. Increasing the number of female community leaders is essential since neighborhood relationships are the cornerstone of human interactions in Turkey and the grassroots level of

political representation. Following the 2014 municipal elections, the number of female metropolitan governors grew from one to three out of thirty.

When it comes to female involvement in mayoral positions, the reality that there are only two female mayors in Turkey's 81 provinces is unacceptable. In addition, while the rest of the world is trying to promote equality through laws and initiatives – with the number of female ministers growing in many civilized countries – just two of Turkey's 26 cabinet ministers are female. In Turkey, women still account for little over a quarter of parliamentary seats and only 14% of ministry positions (Taşkın, 2021). Women should have more power than men on a number of issues, including energy conservation, child care, and the economy. However, in today's Turkey, the basic issue is a lack of equal opportunity, as well as violence against women and unequal representation in all aspects of society.

Conclusion

Women's employment in Turkey during the epidemic period will be negatively affected by both the high rates of female unemployment before Covid-19, the quality of the restricted sectors, and the weight of women among the workers who lack social protection, and the inequalities that existed in terms of job, income, and security before the pandemic. It is a fact that is likely to exacerbate its vulnerability in the face of its economic and social consequences.

Working hours have grown as a result of women's home care responsibilities, and employment losses among women have been quite significant. In these ways, the pandemic that threatens gender equality has already become a major issue in areas where there is a lot of it. Such regressions have the potential to reverse the achievements that women have earned during centuries of struggling. Women were less likely than males to be employed, work full-time, or work in professional jobs even before the epidemic. While women's proclivity to quit the labor as a result of greater unpaid care duties has been disproportionately affected, the pandemic has widened the gap.

Different institutions throughout the world are discussing the gender dimension of the Covid-19 outbreak through the prism of gender in their policy processes. However, in Turkey, the gender component of Covid-19 has not been taken into account in policymaking (KEIG, 2021). The impact of the pandemic on women's employment should be considered in policymaking, and social policy solutions for domestic labor and care load, which is one of the most significant barriers to women's workplace involvement, should be created. More women than males are affected by the pandemic.

Given that the unemployment rate has grown and women's unemployment has increased, the requirements for receiving unemployment benefits should be strengthened. As a result of the pandemic in the female labor market, more research should be continued in order to better understand how disparities in employment, security, and income are changing and deepening, as well as to provide policy suggestions. It will definitely open up new paths for existing ideas, and it may also be utilized to bring attention to and integrate in policy processes the disparities that have grown as a result of the pandemic.

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