

Review

Socio-economic status of women according to development levels of countries and structure in Turkey

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All the view available on gender differ according to socio-cultural and socio-economic development of society. In developed and developing countries, the situation of women are different. Women in developed countries, unlike in underdeveloped and developing countries, are easily accorded more prestige. However, involving women in underdeveloped countries' decisions often taken by men is an attempt to rectify this inequality. In this study, the profile of women according to the level of developed and less developed countries were examined and comparison between the profiles were made.

Key words: Level of development of countries, women, women's profiles, socio-cultural influences, socio-economic structure.

INTRODUCTION

Individuals are one of the key driving factors behind economic and social development of societies. However, this is applicable to societies where gender inequality does not exist. One leg of development is missing in societies where gender equality has not been achieved. The gender role imposed on "females" by the society and expectations of the society from females result in the deprivation of some of their human rights (Anonymous, 2008a). Although we are in the 21st century, such equality, unfortunately, has not yet been achieved in developing countries. This is one of the primary reasons why such countries lag behind in socio-economic and socio-cultural fields and fail to achieve development. In order for the countries to develop, male-female equality must be achieved. Considering equality between men and women, it is obvious that underdeveloped and developing countries have not achieved such equality yet, while developed countries have earlier solved this problem. Women, who are one of the basic constituents of society, should be given the same status accorded to men in education, business, home life, production and consumption; gender equality should be achieved. Achieving all these in favor of women will lead to an effective means of bringing up future generations and use of the sources in national economy, and thus have direct and indirect effects which will lead to increase in productivity, more fair distribution of income in the

medium and long run, achievement of regional development and finding permanent solutions, increase in employment, and development of agriculture, industry and services sectors. Developing countries, which have more limited sources and lag one or more steps behind in economic development race, should give more importance and priority to the achievement of gender equality for women, particularly in the education of women, in order to fill the gap in the said matters. Giving priority to women in the spread of education will enable developing countries achieve gender equality, and thus economic and social externalities. This is because gender equality in education in addition to many other fields will provide macro and micro economical benefits directly or indirectly to the national economy at both social and individual levels, in addition to some social benefits.

In all societies, women had to struggle to improve their politic, economic and social rights, upgrade their social role and status, and participate in production and management. However, this struggle still continues despite all improvements and welfare upgrades. Our country has recently achieved an average annual growth of 7.5% and has become the 17th greatest economy of the world, however such positive economic improvements are not reflected in employment rates, especially in women's employment, as much as the rest of the

world. According to OECD 2007 report, Turkey, with a 10.6% unemployment rate for women, is in the 6th place in the list of countries with the highest unemployment rates of women. Also, Turkey is 2nd among 28 countries having the fastest-rising unemployment rate for women. Rate of women's participation in the workforce is 26.5%, this makes our country "the worst" among the 30 OECD members (Pehlivanoğlu, 2008). In this study, a general comparison between development levels of countries has been made using national and international data collected from various written sources including the information available in Turkish Statistical Institute and online information. Also several suggestions have been made for the purpose of revealing the effects of countries' development levels on women enabling them to acquire behaviors expected to occur in their socio-cultural and socio-economic fields.

BEHAVIORS OF THE WOMEN IN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Behaviors of the women in developed countries

The conflicts between the principles formed by traditions and customs, and some emotions of people do not exist in developed countries. Whether man or woman, people have broken the taboos and thus have the opportunity of living more freely. Of course, being a woman requires struggling with several difficulties regardless of country or level of development. Results of a research made by United Nations reveal an obvious example of this. According to a research made by United Nations, 66% of the works in the world are done by women, while they have 10% of the total income and 1% of the total properties in the world. Men, on the other hand, are doing 34% of the works in the world, while they have 90% of the total income and 99% of the total properties in the world (Anonymous, 2008b).

Moreover, in developed countries there are differences between the lives of rural and urban women. For example, it is indicated that women living in rural areas have lower educational level as indicated in the USA and England. In the United States, racial differences have occurred in socio-economic status, education, and employment status (Kimmel, 1997; Hoggart and Cheng, 2006).

Behaviors of the women in developing countries

Removing the imbalances in income distribution has become the primary purpose of developing countries. Income distribution is one of the most important issues in economic and social structures or levels of development of all countries. The greatest difficulties in living in developing countries include the conflicts between the

principles formed by religious beliefs, traditions and customs, and some emotions of people.

According to underdeveloped mentality, behaviors against religious beliefs and traditions and customs must be punished. Emotions against this belief are integrated in human beings like a bomb and if one pulls the pin on this bomb, the whole system explodes. Women, with feelings burning inside of them, are suffering from the pressure to ignore such feelings, or otherwise be subjected to a social punishment. However, men seem luckier than women with regards to this matter in underdeveloped countries. In addition to more self-expression opportunities, taboos imposed on men are lesser in number and have weaker sanctions than those imposed on women.

Women face much more difficulties in business participation than men. These difficulties are caused by the traditional role of women and inconsistency between social expectations suitable for such roles and business life. Some examples of this include lack of organizations /establishments for providing child-care and housework supports or the expensiveness of their services, unavailability of some jobs for women according to some written or unwritten rules, preventing or not supporting women's promotion in business life, sexual harassment, etc. (Gelegen, 2001). Hoşgör and Smits (2008) implied in their study that the labor market participation of women varies much among developing countries. According to this, there are countries where over 60% of women are gainfully employed (e.g. Kazankhstan, Cambodia, Ghana), but there are also countries (e.g. Algeria, Egypt, Iran) where less than 20% of women are engaged in paid labor. However, given the central role of work force and the empowerment of women, it is important to increase our understanding of the factors that promote or hinder female employment in developing countries. Therefore, women in developing countries are forced to restrict their behaviors, lives, thoughts, demands, etc. and are expected to play the roles determined by the society and obey the rules. This indicates that the difference between development levels of developed and developing countries has effects on women's roles and social statuses in the society.

SOCIO - CULTURAL AND SOCIO - ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN IN TURKEY

Today, individuals' characteristics have begun to be referred to as social groups and societies constituted by such groups. Behavioral characteristics of women and men, education level, division of labor, job structure, wage level, expectations of employee about job are affected by social values (Temel et al., 2006). Although equality between women and men is provided formally by laws in Turkey, economic, social and political repression of women and gender inequality still continues in Turkey,

like in many other countries. Rate of women's participation in the workforce differs in urban and rural areas. Furthermore, despite all relative improvements, gender inequalities in social status, health, education, law, social and political fields, and traditional practices such as women's insufficient communication in the society and with family members, bride price, marriage by force and violence against women are still among the problems of our country. Also, depiction of women as sexual objects in the media has negatively affected women's social status. Factors affecting domestic violence against women in four Turkish cities (Adiyaman, Sivas, Denizli and Kırklareli) having different socioeconomic structures, are analyzed in the study of Kocacik et al. (2007). According to this, a positive relationship has been found between family income and violence. However, working women and women with children are more prone to domestic violence. Nevertheless, a university graduate having a personal income decreases the prevalence of violence.

The fact that the social and economic statuses of women living in rural areas and the women living in the eastern part of Turkey are lower than those of the women living in urban areas and the western part of Turkey and this negatively affects the lives of such women (Anonymous 2008c). 16% of the women participate in business life in big cities (Koray, 2001). The prior reason for this is insufficient demand in workforce market. And the second reason is insufficient education. Education, which provides women with the qualifications required by the labor market, is at low levels, and therefore women are forced to work at jobs that do not require the qualifications provided by education. Lastly, patriarchal system which keeps the women at home may be included in reasons for the participation stated earlier. On the other hand, rates of participation in workforce in Turkey by gender are 69.5% for men and 27.9% for women. Rate of women's participation in workforce is 15.2% in the urban area, while it is 44.4% in rural areas. This rate keeps decreasing. In addition to inequality between rates of women's and men's participation in the workforce, women lag behind men in terms of employment opportunities. Women's unemployment rate is higher than men's. The lowest rate of women's participation is observed in executive managerial positions. Numbers of women managers are low, since women cannot utilize the equality of opportunity as a result of gender discrimination in education. Also, such positions require much more qualifications, time and energy. Working women's lack of knowledge and skills for high-level jobs are brought about by their duties as a wife and mother and this prevents women from participating in the workforce and being promoted at work, and as a result, from specialization (Çalışkan and Kocakuşak, 2004). On the other hand, labor force participation of women in agricultural areas is the highest. According to UNDP data, the rate of women participation

in work force in 2005 was 52% in agriculture while that of the industry is 15%, which is at the lowest level (Anonymous, 2008h).

Comparison between developed countries and our country in respect of rates of women's participation in business life reveals that our country, with a 30% rate, lags behind developed countries where such rate has reached up to 45 - 50%. And most of the people within the said 30% are still working as unpaid family workers. In our country, where 30% of women are still illiterate, women without technical skills and education are working in the lowest-paid jobs as uninsured employees (Emre, 2004). Employment rates according to literacy level and field of economic activity are given by years in Table 1. Table 1 shows that the rate of working women in 1980 was 41.2% higher than that of 2007. Several economic crises suffered by our country from 1980 to 2007 and the priority given to women employees in job dismissals by employers may be given as reasons for such decrease. Literacy rate of women in the population aged from 6-25 doubled between 1980 and 2007 as shown in Table 1. Although women's education level increased, women's literacy rate did not rise up to the desired level in Turkey. Educational participation, especially of girls, is found to still be a major concern, with non-enrollment being especially high in the countryside and the eastern part of the country. Parental education, number of siblings, household income, occupation of the father and traditionality of the mother are major factors affecting participation. It is indicated that Turkey has the general characteristics of developing countries (Smits and Hoşgör, 2006).

EFFECT OF EDUCATION ON WOMEN BY DEVELOPMENT-LEVEL OF COUNTRIES

Comparison between developed and developing countries in respect of effects of education on women, reveals that educated women in developed countries play more roles in social and business life than those in developing countries. The major reason for this is higher level and longer time of education in developed countries than those in developing countries. Education indicators are not equal between genders and differ in development levels and age and income groups. Education not only increases personal benefits but also creates positive externalities for the society. Success in defining and implementing educational policies may be increased by taking gender, program types, teaching level and development levels of countries into account when measuring personal and social benefits of education (Yumuşak, 2004). Both in developed and developing countries, as well as in Turkey, the idea that human capital acquired through education positively affects economic growth has emerged. Personal benefit of education is higher than measurable social benefit of the

Table 1. According to the distribution of economic activity of women and the literacy rate of women over the age of 6-25 (Anonymous 2003; 2008i).

Economic activity according to the employee population					
	1980	1985	1990	2000	2007
Male	11.708.8	13.064.1	14.973.5	16.567.4	52.9
Female	6.813.5	7.492.7	8.408.4	9.429.7	24.3
Total	18.522.3	20.556.8	23.381.9	25.997.1	38.1

The women aged 25 and more in the literacy rate of population (%)					
	1980	1985	1990	2000	2007*
Non literate	62.4	45.9	40.2	27.4	18.02
Not graduated from an educational institution	5.6	8.4	5.6	7.5	7.82
Primary school	24.7	36.1	41.6	45.2	43.35
Secondary school and equivalent	2.2	2.8	3.6	5.3	4.94
High school and equivalent	3.5	4.9	6.1	9.1	12.15
Colleges and faculties	1.6	1.8	2.8	5.4	7.08

The women aged 6 and 24 in the literacy rate of population (%)					
	1980	1985	1990	2000	2007**
Non literate	45.3	31.8	28.0	19.4	2.36
Not graduated from an educational institution	14.7	18.1	15.6	21.5	47.26
Primary school	31.4	39.5	43.2	37.2	30.44
Secondary school and equivalent	3.7	4.5	5.4	4.9	-
High school and equivalent	3.7	5.0	6.0	10.6	14.92
Colleges and faculties	1.2	1.1	1.8	3.9	0.70

*According to 2007 data, women aged 25 and more in the literacy rate of population 6.6%.

**According to 2007 data, women aged 6 and 24 in the literacy rate of population 4.3%.

same.

Furthermore, it was stated that the level of education that yields the highest personal and social benefits is primary education. Benefit of education for women is higher than that for men, and personal and social benefits of education in our developing country are higher than those in developed countries. Therefore, women's education is more important in developing countries compared to other countries (Yumuşak, 2004; Özpölat ve Yıldırım, 2009). The significant difference between educational and traditional structures of social groups in developing countries prevents the establishment of an organic relation between such groups. Despite having started to lose its strength on economic improvements, traditional structure still prevents socioeconomic structure from keeping pace with development in modern production methods. Furthermore, there are little or no traditional democratic institutions in developing countries, and the social organizations formed for the purpose of reaching modern levels are nothing more than formalistic organizations. For example, women are usually consumers and remain economically dependent upon men due to their socio-economic weakness. Having limited opportunities to be successful in business life, the women in developing countries, including children in rural areas, constitute an ancillary workforce. Due to

insufficient level of income, children, instead of going school, are becoming a source of income for their families and a cheap workforce for employers. The factors that prevent women's progress on educational, political, economic, social, cultural, legal and religious conditions are closely related. These factors cause the emergence of women inequality, injustice and exploitative condition in the family, society, national, regional and international levels (Özgen and Ufuk, 2000). On the other hand, middle class consisting of state employees and the self-employed has recently started to sprout up in developing countries and they constitute 5-10% of the total population. Developed countries have strong bourgeoisie while bourgeoisie do not exist in developing countries (Anonymous, 2008d). Education levels of women in developed and developing countries of the world are given in Table 2 by indicators of average year of education according to development levels. Developing countries have the lowest averages, as it appears from Table 2. Average periods of women's and men's education in developing countries and gender rates in Table 2 indicate that period of women's education relatively increased from 1970 to 2000s in the age-groups of 15 - 25 years old but could not reach up to that of men's education; however, gender rates have increased towards 2000s. This means an increase

Table 2. Educational attainment by sex (average school year) (Barro and Lee, 2001).

Region (no. of countries)	Yil	Population age 25 and over			Population age 15 and over		
		Average school year		Gender ratio (A/B, %)	Average school year		Gender ratio (A/B, %)
		Female A	Male B		Female A	Male B	
All developing (73)	1970	1.52	3.07	49.7	1.94	3.38	57.2
	1980	2.20	3.94	55.9	2.74	4.37	62.5
	2000	4.03	5.74	70.2	4.33	5.92	73.2
All developing (73)	1970	7.22	7.82	92.3	7.33	7.81	93.9
	1980	8.39	8.98	93.5	8.65	9.09	95.2
	2000	9.55	10.06	94.9	9.53	10.01	95.3
Transitional economies (11)	1970	7.74	8.74	88.6	8.09	8.93	90.6
	1980	8.21	9.20	89.2	8.50	9.36	90.7
	2000	10.01	9.87	101.5	9.89	9.44	104.7
World (107)	1970	4.65	5.54	83.9	4.74	5.59	84.7
	1980	5.27	6.31	83.6	5.42	6.43	84.3
	2000	6.18	7.28	84.9	6.13	7.19	85.9

occurred in periods of women's education. In developed countries and transition economies, average periods of women's and men's education increased from 6 to approximately 8 years from 1970 to 1980 and reached up to approximately 10 years in 2000. The greatest educational gap between women and men exists in developing countries. Educational gap between women and men is against women in developing countries, while it is against men in transition economies, where average level of women's education is higher than men's (Barro and Lee, 2001). On the other hand, as it appears from Table 3 average literacy rate in the world is 65.92% for women and 68.12% for men. Table 3 indicates that period of women's education relatively increased from 2000 to 2007 in the age-groups of women older than 15 and over aged. However, gender rates have increased in 2007 (Anonymous, 2009).

On the other hand, Table 4 shows the income and age group of women with low education indicators and that of the men (Anonymous, 2009). According to Table 4, average literacy rate in the world is 68.52% for women and 69.91% for men. And schooling rates are 59.16% for women and 69.88% for men. Furthermore, the inequality between genders increases as the income decreases. Literacy rates are 93.21 and 93.81%, 78.07 and 75.39% and 34.29 and 40.53% for women and men in high-income countries, middle-income countries, and in low-income countries, respectively. Gender inequality in schooling rates, which indicate educational status of young population, is lower in the population of 15 years old and older, which means that such inequality has a downward trend. Human resources in a society contribute significantly to social improvement and thereby to

economic development. Quality and length of individuals' educations have significant effect on such improvement and development. The relationship between social benefits of education and individual may depend on individuals' education, crime tendency, marriage, career choice, health of such individuals and their family, etc. (Wolfe and Haveman, 2002).

CURRENT SITUATION OF WOMEN IN THE WORLD AND OUR COUNTRY

Social concept of gender created by a society which defines the values, roles, behaviors and similar characteristics of female and male is reflected in masculine and feminine characteristics attributed to women and men due to their status in the society, and are also reflected in their work lives and manners of doing works in business life, education, health and many other fields. Therefore, women's role in both society and family constitutes the borders of women's labor in business life. Structural, economic and social factors relating to this matter support each other and disorders in the system puts women in a disadvantageous position (Torun and Şener, 2009). The following results are given in UN Report "World's Women 2000": Two thirds of the world's total literates and 70% of the severely poor population consist of women and there are only 8 women scientists who won the Nobel Prize. One third of the world's total women population suffers from violence by their husbands or partners.

Each year, two million girls at the age of 5 to 15 years old are forced to have sexual intercourse and women,

Table 3. Educational attainment by sex to 2009 UNDP statistic data

Region (no. of countries)	Average literacy rate (2007) (population age 15 and over)		Gender ratio (A/B. %)
	Female A	Male B	
All developing country (22)	42.65	53.66	79.48
Advanced country (68)	66.06	67.22	98.27
High-advanced country (77)	89.05	83.48	106.67
World (167)	65.92	68.12	96.77

Table 4. According to 2007 statistic data of gender and income group Literacy and Schooling Rates (Anonyomus, 2009).

Income levels of countries	Literacy rate (%) (15 years and over)		Schooling rates (%)		Average income (\$)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
High Income	93.21	93.81	88.29	82.20	35137.01	69172.58
Middle income	78.07	75.39	63.00	94.27	2972.58	6177.69
Low income	34.29	40.53	26.19	33.16	681.04	1238.09
World	68.52	69.91	59.16	69.88	226.84	447.88

particularly those in war regions, suffer from sexual harassment. Each year, 80 million unwanted pregnancies happen, 52 million women give birth on their own and 500.000 mothers die from birth-related reasons. As to the women in our country, average age of marriage is 17 years old and 30% of girls get married or are forced to get marriage at the age of 13 to 15 years old in the East and Southeast Regions of Turkey. 60.9% of women are married to their relatives, husbands of 8.6% of women are married to other women, and 66.4% of women do not use birth control methods. Furthermore, 86.5% of women do not leave home despite domestic violence, and 78% of these women have to accept the situation and exercise patience. Only 10.2% of women get married willingly (Göksel, 2004). On the other hand, another area where women suffer from inequity is political representation. Regarding political representation in the 21st century, a quantitative defect draws our attention in the first place. Comparison between developed and developing countries as to political representation in 1995 and today is given in Table 5.

Table 5 suggests that number of female members in parliaments of Scandinavian and European countries is considerably higher than those in parliaments of Asian countries and Turkey. Here, the striking point is that Turkey is in the last place as to rate of women members in parliament, although Turkey is located in both European and Asian continents and has a more liberal and secular system than Iran's system.

Rate of women members in Turkish parliament in 1999 elections did not have a significant change in 2002 elections. Number of women members in Turkish parliament, which had been 23 in April 18, 1999, increased to only 24 in 2000 (4.36%). However, this number has increased to 50 in July 23, 2007 elections,

which means both the number and the rate (9.09%) of women members in Turkish parliament has been doubled (Anonymous, 2008f). According to a research made on December 2007 by Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), there was a slight increase in number of women members in the world's parliaments. In the report, it stated that number of women members of parliaments in 2007 was 2% higher than the previous year, which means that total rate of women members in the world's parliaments increased up to 17.7%. Furthermore, it is stated that there are only 4 countries where rate of women members in parliament is 40% or more. Rwanda has the highest number of women parliament-members in the world. In this little country situated in the east Africa, rate of women parliament-members have increased to 48.8% upon enforcement of the quota for women in the parliament. The second, third and fourth highest rates of women parliament-members are 47% in Swedish parliament, 41.5% in Finnish parliament and 40% in Argentina's parliament. Also, Germany is in the 17th place with a 31.6% rate of women parliament-members, USA is in the 71st place with a rate of 16.8% and Turkey is in the 107th place with a rate of 9.09%. Amman, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which do not have one single women parliament-member, are some of the countries in the last places of the said list. Mr. Anders Johnson, Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, stated that there is a significant increase in the rate of women in politics and a positive conversion, however the progress is slow. He also stated that rate of women parliament-members is less than 10% in more than half of the 146 countries, and rates of women ministers are lower than this. Only 16% of ministries in the world are dominated by women, and Finland, where 11 ministers out of 19 are women, has the highest

Table 5. Participation of women in parliament ownership rates in different countries. (Anonymous, 2008e).

Countries	The percentages of women members in the parliament by year (%)				
	1995	1999	2004	2006	2007
Sweden	40	43	45	45	47
Denmark	33	37	38	37	37
Norway	39	36	36	38	38
Holland	31	36	37	37	37
Germany	26	31	32	32	32
Argentina	22	28	34	35	35
Spain	16	22	36	36	36
Switzerland	18	21	25	25	25
Luxembourg	20	17	20	23	23
Englandt	10	18	18	20	20
Portugal	9	13	19	21	21
USA	11	13	14	15	16
Belgium	12	23	35	35	35
Italy	15	11	12	17	17
France	6	11	12	12	12
Israel	9	12	15	14	14
Greece	6	6	14	13	13
Iran	3	5	3	4	4
Japan	3	5	7	-	9
Turkey	2	4	4	4	9

number of women ministers, while Germany, where 5 ministers out of 15 are women, is in the 17th place as to the said number (Anonymous, 2008g). Inter-Parliamentary Union emphasized that women are usually of secondary importance in parliaments and cabinets, and that rate of women presidents and prime ministers is less than 5%.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Women, no matter where they live, have to lead a struggling life. Gender inequalities in participating in social life and utilizing opportunities are applicable not only to Turkey but also to all developed countries. Policies to realize gender equality and remove discrimination in society are not sufficiently integrated to the main plans, programs and practices of relevant countries.

According to the data in 2007, Scandinavian countries have the highest number of women in their parliaments; for example, 47% of Swiss parliament consists of women. This means that development of countries is interconnected with creating policies to remove gender discrimination in society and to form social consciousness. As to women's education in developed and developing countries, period of women's education is longer in developed countries compared to developing countries. Developing countries should remove gender

gap by attaching more importance to women's education, and give priority to the policies to spread primary education. Women in developed economies have much more chance to utilize the opportunity to work in proper jobs suitable to their educations and qualifications than the women in other economies. Women in developed economies have the opportunity to live under better conditions since they can live more freely at their homes and have men share housework and other works at home with them. As to politics, women in developed economies take place in nearly all stages of politics. However, rates of women parliament-members in developing economies are low, and women are not appointed to strategic positions but given passive tasks in politics. Women in developing countries serve in positions of 'secondary importance'.

As to adherence to customs and traditions, women in developing countries are more traditionalists. As a matter of fact, environmental pressure forces such women to be more traditionalists. This can be stopped by upgrading education. As to income by genders, average income of the women in developed economies is higher than that of the women in other economies. Income of the women in developed economies is four times more than that of the nearest economy. 66% of the works in the world are done by women, while they have 10% of the total income and 1% of the total properties in the world. However, men are doing 34% of the works in the world, while they have 90% of the total income and 99% of the total properties in the

world. All the results above indicate that being a woman in a developing country is difficult in effect, they are considered as a second-class person. Major consequences of this are financial difficulties which results to poverty. Poverty leads to formation of societies with a low-level socio-culture, and consequences of such formation are borne by the women, and therefore the children. Since unfair distribution of income leads to inequality in education, women, who want to participate in economy, have to struggle to have the jobs they want or the positions that may offer more prestige. Since the women or men in developed economies have higher gross national product (GNP) per capita, their living conditions are fairer than the women in lower economies.

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