

A THEORETICAL STUDY ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN ACADEMICS¹

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ABSTRACT

To ensure sustainable economic growth and development, women need to participate in the labor force together with men. Women, who started to participate more in the labor force with the industrial revolution, have been seen as an alternative to male labor in all areas of their working life. It was thought that the patriarchal mindset such as "woman's place is at home" was dominant and women should only take care of their homes, husbands, and children. Therefore, no matter which sector women are involved in, they constantly face obstacles. Of course, although policies aimed at increasing women's employment have been implemented over time, the obstacles that women face in working life and have difficulty in overcoming continue. For this reason, the place and importance of women in working life is an issue that needs to be researched. One of the institutions where women face some obstacles in working life is higher education institutions. It is noteworthy that the number of female academics in Turkey is higher compared to EU countries, but this seemingly positive situation is not reflected in their positions in the academic hierarchy. In this context, this study evaluates the employment of women academics in Türkiye.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Women Academics, Women Employment

1. INTRODUCTION

"Our women will have knowledge and science and will pass through all the educational steps that men pass through"

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

From the past to the present, social and cultural myths have been effective in determining the status of women in society. From the past to the present, women have been involved in economic activities according to the conditions and requirements of each period. Especially with the policies implemented since the 1980s and flexible working methods, women have an important position in the labor markets (Gökçe, 2023: 65) and they are also an important element for fairer, more livable, and sustainable societies. In this respect, regulations for women are included in the "Sustainable Development Goals" especially under the "Gender Category" (Esen, 2023). Although it is underlined that equal participation of women and men in the labor force should be ensured for healthy development and growth, women have remained and continue to remain behind in working life compared to men despite all improvement policies. Today, despite all social, social, and cultural developments, a framework has been drawn for women as a reserve labor force, which is put in the second plan after men and which can be used when needed in working life. Especially in patriarchal societies, women have been prevented from participating in the labor force at the same rate as men, which has led to a delay in the proletarianization of women's labor (Kuşat, 2021: 104). Women's employment is important not only because it contributes financially but also because it requires women to gain values such as dignity, economic independence, and status (Ayta & Şen, 2023: 422). Higher education institutions are one of the areas where women's employment is ensured especially

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in positions such as senior managers (Rector, Vice Rector, Dean, Vice Dean). In the national and international literature, studies on the status of women's employment in higher education are frequently conducted. In the light of literature reviews and analyzed data, it is seen that the problems faced by women in academia are mainly related to senior management positions, and senior management positions are generally dominated by a male-dominated structure (Aktaş, 2020: 272). Studies on women academics in our country focus on the low representation of women academics in university administration and the difficulties faced by women academics (Ehtiyar et al., 2019: 297).

Although the number of female academics is increasing day by day, unfortunately, it is seen that the gap between the equality of women and men is widening, especially in senior management positions. The presence of women in decision-making positions in academia will allow women's knowledge to be reflected in the decisions taken, and a management approach in which this knowledge and awareness are taken into consideration will be established within the academic culture. It is of great importance that universities, which prepare the future of our country's youth for life, have a vision that adopts gender equality as an institution in every field, including a gender equality perspective in their education and research activities, and generally purify all areas of academic life from prejudices and discriminatory practices and gain a role model identity (Sezgin & Hobikoğlu, 2022: 78). In this context, this study analyses the status of women's employment in academia in Türkiye within a theoretical framework.

1.1. Literature Review

In the literature, many studies have been conducted on women's employment, women's entry and progression in higher education, and the factors affecting women's employment in academia. It is extremely important to conduct studies on women, who are an important labor factor in the national economy. Some of the literature studies are as follows:

Teevan et al. (1992) investigated which factors are effective in promotion decisions of academicians. A questionnaire was applied to 115 academicians who worked at the university between 1986 and 1989. According to the findings of the study; academicians evaluate whether the senior positions they will be promoted to will satisfy them and job guarantees without discriminating between men and women in their promotion decisions.

Goldin (1995), explained that female labor force participation is U-shaped depending on economic development. He stated that women join the labor force during periods of economic development. In this case, he explained it with the upward part of the U-shape. In the upward part of the U-shape, women are included in the labor market with economic development. The reasons for this are given in the study.

Özkanlı and Korkmaz (2000), investigated whether female academics experience a role conflict in their academic life. In the study, it was concluded that female academics who do not experience role conflict do not have the same academic progress as male academics and that there is no difference in reaching senior management positions; however, female academics who experience role conflict are not in the same conditions as male academics.

Ginther (2006), analyses the difference between the recruitment, promotion, and salaries of male and female academics with PhDs in science and social sciences. According to the findings of the study; women with a doctorate can move to a permanent job 5 years later than men, and married women are more disadvantaged than men in working life.

Ginther and Kahn (2014) investigated whether there is gender-based discrimination in the field of social sciences. Ginther and Kahn (2014) concluded that female academics who want to take senior management positions in the fields of economics, sociology, and anthropology are more likely to face gender-based discrimination.

Ceci et al. (2014), concluded that women are underrepresented in graduate programs of university departments and professorships. While men are more concentrated in fields such as earth sciences, engineering, economics, and mathematics, men are more concentrated in psychology, life sciences, and social sciences.

Yenilmez (2016), evaluated the challenges and opportunities faced by women academics in academia. Although the rate of female academics in Turkey is higher compared to some developed European countries, it is stated that the responsibilities of female academics, who have a mother's duty at home, are a factor affecting labor productivity.

Adak (2018), analysed women's entrance to higher education and progression in their academic careers with the data obtained from YÖK and TÜİK. In the study, it was found that there is a horizontal segregation among women academics in Türkiye. While it was observed that women progressed more in the field of social sciences, men progressed more in the field of science and technical sciences. It was found that women are less represented in senior management positions compared to men. The main conclusion of the study is that contrary to the increase in the number of female academics in academia, male academics are more represented in senior management positions in academia.

Kızılyalçın (2021), examined gender discrimination in terms of accountant women and accountant academics. Although the number of female accountant academics in higher education is less than men, it is seen that there is a male-dominated structure in management levels.

1.2. Employment of Women

The Global Gender Inequality Index, published annually by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in four main dimensions (Economic Participation and Opportunity, Education Status, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment), reveals the current state of gender inequality. The 17th edition of the index, which has been published since 2006, revealed the current situation by comparing gender equality in 146 countries (HWN, 2023:5). Türkiye ranks 129th among 146 countries in the Global Gender Equality Index in 2023 (WEF, 2023). In addition, Türkiye ranks 36th among 38 OECD countries and is among the countries with the lowest female labor force participation rate (OECD, 2023). Increasing women's labor force participation rate is one of the most effective tools for the growth of Türkiye's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Türkiye has the potential to increase its GDP by 20% by 2025 if it increases its female labor force participation rate from 30% to the OECD average of 63% through effective and sustainable policies (Mc Kinsey & Company, 2016). For this reason, when the economic and social effects of women's participation in the labor force and employment are evaluated, it is seen that socio-cultural factors such as educational status, consumption-savings relationship, budget allocated for health and education, fertility are decisive and as a result, it is clear how open it is for sustainable economic growth and economic development (Bal et al., 2023).

Factors affecting women's entry into the labor force can be social, cultural, and economic characteristics. However, other factors other than the factors that will not change fundamentally may differ from country to country or from culture to culture. Factors such as legal regulations, marital status, age, education level, the socio-cultural structure of the society, glass ceiling syndrome, fertility rate, and wage level affect women's participation in the labor force (Küçükbaş and Kocabaş, 2023: 33). Let us briefly explain these.

Legal Arrangements: Legal arrangements made for women in working life date back to the early 20th century. Capitalism, which emerged in the 1800s, benefited from women's labor by gender roles, so women encountered the phenomenon of paid work outside of agriculture. Women's working lives, shaped by gender rules, became the subject of legal regulations with modernization (Yatar, 2015: 29). The Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye also emphasizes that women should be equal. It is stated that women and men have equal rights (Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye, 1982). In Labour Law No. 4857, the provisions enacted to protect the rights of women employees are emphasized. Even if some of these provisions are favorable for women employees, some provisions may create negativity. For example, provisions stating that women should not work in heavy and high-hazardous jobs such as mining, construction, and sewerage. It is important that these provisions, whose main objective is to ensure the equality of women in working life, should be reviewed in the modern world order within the scope of technological and scientific advances (Küçükbay & Kocabaş, 2023: 33).

Marital status: Women who are caught between family life and working life are caught in the middle because they cannot fully fulfill both important roles. This situation causes role conflict (Yağcıoğlu, 2018: 102). Married women are more likely to be in the labour market than single women. The LFPR of married women may vary according to the occupation or age of the spouse (Lee et al., 2007).

Age: Age groups and women's participation in the labor force are likened to the letter "M". The rate, which reaches its highest level at the ages of 20-24, shows a downward trend starting from the 30s, increases again after the 40s, and peaks at the age of 54. After the 30s, women's participation in the labour force increases due to the increase in birth rates. The reflection of age, which is one of the factors affecting women's participation in the labor force, on women's working life is generally in this way. For example, in a study conducted in the USA in 1992, it was concluded that 78% of mothers with school-age children (6-17) can be found in the labor market, while 67% of mothers with children under the age of 6 can be found in the labor market (Özer & Bıçerli, 2003: 68). Talaş ve Çakmak (2013), he examined women's labour force participation on the age variable. She utilised data from TÜİK for the years 2000-2010 and conducted Cohort Analysis. According to the findings of the study, it was emphasized that age was an important factor affecting women's labor force participation between 2000-2010.

Education Level: Education level is a factor that increases women's labor force participation rate, and determinist workers' wages and job seekers' preferences. Taşcıoğlu (2023), It is concluded that women with low level of education work in unqualified jobs for shorter periods of time, whereas women with higher level of education work in more qualified jobs with higher wages.

Cultural structure: The value judgments of the society as well as the policies implemented for employment, which is an important macroeconomic indicator, is an important factor affecting women's participation in the labor force. The wage level as well as the level of economic development of the country is important in the employment of both women and men. However, low levels of education, a patriarchal mindset, and cultural values in the context of gender understanding also affect women's participation in the labor force (Küçükali, 2014: 2).

Glass Ceiling Syndrome: The term "glass ceiling", which was first used by Hymowitz and Schelhard in 1986 in a special report on corporate women in the Wall Street Journal, was defined as a concept in which women are prevented by institutional traditions and prejudices from reaching a better position in working life (Jackson, 2001: 30). Hymowitz and Schelhard expressed the glass ceiling as an obstacle in women's working life and explained it as follows: Senior female employees both see themselves under pressure against a glass ceiling and find themselves in the showcase under the glass. Women stated that they are concerned not only about their responsibilities in their working life, but also about the clothes they wear, the ideologies they have, and even the jokes they make (İnel et al., 2014: 3).

Fertility rate: Güriş et al. (2019), investigated women's employment in OECD countries and concluded that fertility rate positive affects women's employment. Yeşilkaya (2022), analyzed the long-run relationship between female employment and birth rate based on data for Sweden and the USA for the years 1991-2020 and found a positive relationship. In addition, based on the differences in the socioeconomic and cultural structure of the countries, it was found that Sweden is in better conditions than the USA in terms of ensuring gender equality and that women's ability to return to their working life after giving birth is higher in Sweden.

Wage inequality: The gender pay gap is another serious problem that has persisted since women entered the labor market. The gender pay gap measures the difference between the wage levels of men and women in the labour market. This gap is not the difference in wages between a male and a female worker doing the same job and having the same characteristics, but the difference between the average wage levels of all working women and men (ILO, 2022: 12). According to the Women in Working Life Index published by PWC (2023), it is concluded that the policies implemented in OECD countries in the direction of gender equality are not at an adequate level; the wage gap has decreased by only 2.5 points since 2011 and the wage gap is 14%. If the steps towards achieving gender equality continue to be taken slowly, a woman of 18 years of age today will not see wage equality throughout her working life.

International regulations on working women in the world: United Nations (UN), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Labour in Europe (OECD), conventions ratified by many countries, decisions taken, declarations published, European Union (EU) regulations and directives, recommendations, decisions and opinions (Adakale Demirhan & Ekonomi, 2005).

The European Parliament conducted a survey to investigate the effects of the pandemic on women's mental health. As a result of the survey, 77% of women in the USA, 93% in Greece, 47% in Hungary were subjected to psychological and physical violence during the pandemic (Eurobarometer, 2022).

In the pandemic, women faced more unemployment than men. Based on data from all US recessions since 1949, the 2020 recession deviated more sharply from the historical norm, with unequal effects across genders. Much higher job losses for women will not only be important for gender equality but will also reduce the ability of families to compensate for income losses, creating a deeper and more persistent recession (Tertilt et al., 2020). The ILO report "Employment and Social Outlook for the World: Trends 2023" report of the ILO; globally, the labor force participation rate of women was 47.4% in 2022, while that of men was 72.3%. 24.9% difference shows that for every man out of the labor force, two women cannot join the labor force (ILO, 2023: 12).

Table 1. 2020-2021 Labour Force Status by Gender and Education Status

Eğitim durumu	İşgücüne katılım oranı Labour force participation rate						İstihdam oranı Employment rate						İşsizlik oranı Unemployment rate					
	2020			2021			2020			2021			2020			2021		
	Toplam	Erkek	Kadın	Toplam	Erkek	Kadın	Toplam	Erkek	Kadın	Toplam	Erkek	Kadın	Toplam	Erkek	Kadın	Toplam	Erkek	Kadın
Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	
Toplam																		
Total	49.3	68.2	30.9	51.4	70.3	32.8	42.8	59.8	26.3	45.2	62.8	28.0	13.2	12.3	15.0	12.0	10.7	14.7
Okuryazar olmayanlar																		
Illiterate	14.7	26.4	12.4	15.6	29.6	12.8	13.4	21.9	11.7	14.3	25.3	12.1	9.1	17.0	5.6	8.2	14.5	5.3
Lise altı eğitimliler																		
Less than high school	44.0	63.4	24.1	45.5	65.3	25.3	38.4	55.1	21.3	40.5	58.0	22.5	12.7	13.1	11.6	11.1	11.1	11.2
Lise																		
High school	49.5	66.4	29.9	52.0	68.9	32.5	41.8	57.3	23.8	44.7	60.8	26.0	15.6	13.7	20.3	14.1	11.7	19.9
Mesleki veya teknik																		
lise																		
Vocational high school	61.6	77.9	37.0	63.9	80.1	38.5	52.7	68.9	28.3	55.6	71.9	30.1	14.4	11.5	23.5	12.9	10.2	21.8
Yükseköğretim																		
Higher education	75.0	83.3	65.6	76.5	84.6	67.6	65.4	74.9	54.6	67.0	76.7	56.2	12.8	10.1	16.8	12.4	9.3	16.8

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute, Labour Force Statistics, 2022.

When the data on the labor force participation rate, employment rate, and unemployment rate in Table 1 are evaluated; the general labor force participation rate was 49.3% in 2020 and 51.4% in 2021, the general employment rate was 42.8% in 2020 and 45.2% in 2021, and the general unemployment rate was 13.2% in 2020 and 12.0% in 2021. As the level of education increases, the labor force participation rate increases for both men and women. However, the labor force participation rate, employment rate, and unemployment rate of women in educational levels other than higher education are half of the rates given for men. The first risk that women face in the labor market is unemployment. In this context, as can be seen from the unemployment data in the table, when women enter the labor market, they are more likely to be unemployed compared to men (Eleventh Development Plan, 2018).

1.3. Academia and Women's Employment

With the recruitment of the first female academician to the teaching staff of the Higher School of Economics and Commerce in the 1932-1933 academic year, women started to work as academicians at universities in Türkiye. Afterwards, the number of female academics reached 93 by 1935. As in other professional groups, the first women to enter academia were urban upper or middle-class women (Şentürk, 2015: 6). After 1980, women started to take more place in academic life. However, the increase in the number of female academics after the 1980 military coup, when labor wages fell, unionization decreased and especially universities were emptied, is significant (Halifeoğlu, 2020: 173-174).

After the 20th century, although there has been an increase in the position of women in academia, inequalities in women's participation in academic life have been shaped horizontally and vertically since the second half of the 19th century. Despite all the advances in women's employment, research shows that women academicians cannot take part in the upper levels of

academia and face academic barriers (Öztañ & Dođan, 2015: 194-195). There are two types of segregation in academia: horizontal segregation and vertical segregation.

Horizontal segregation: Concentration of women or men in certain occupations in working life. In the literature, horizontal segregation is defined as the unequal distribution of women and men across scientific fields (She Figures, 2012:86).

Vertical segregation: In the literature, vertical segregation is referred to as the "glass ceiling", which refers to the existence of visible or invisible barriers that lead to a scarcity of women in positions of power and decision-making in public organizations, businesses, but also in associations and trade unions (Laufer, 2002; cited in She Figures, 2012).

Özbiłgin and Healy (2004), analyze women's entry into higher education in Türkiye in three stages. In the first phase until the 1920-1930s, principles paving the way for women to enter academic employment were put into practice by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. These principles paved the way for women's employment until the 1940s-1980s when the number of women employed in higher education increased. In the 1990s, the increase in women's employment was further reinforced with the establishment of foundation universities. The proportion of female academics in Türkiye increased from 19 percent in 1960 to 34.6 percent in 1999. In 1999 there were 7832 professors in Turkish universities, 22.9 percent of whom were women, an increase from only 15 percent in the early 1980s.

According to the data of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), while the number of female academics in Türkiye was 4,915 in 1983-1984, according to the data of October 2023, the number of female academics in total teaching staff (184,566) in Türkiye has increased to 85,220. Table 2 shows the number of academic staff by university in Türkiye in 2022-2023.

Table 2. Quantitative Status of Women Academics in Türkiye in 2022-2023

		State	Foundation	Foundation Vocational School	Total
Professor	M	19192	3468	4	22644
	F	9770	1846	0	11.616
	T	28962	5314	4	34.280
Associate Prof.	M	12021	1281	0	13.302
	F	7943	1211	1	9.155
	T	19964	2497	1	22.462
Assistant Prof. Dr.	M	19118	4464	9	23.591
	F	15488	5111	26	20.625
	T	34606	9575	35	44.216
Lecturer	M	15663	2270	65	17988
	F	14401	4498	142	19041
	T	30064	6768	207	37039
Research Assistant	M	19830	1961	0	21791
	F	21555	3223	0	24778
	T	41385	5184	0	46569
Total	M	85824	13444	78	99.346
	F	69157	15894	169	85220
	T	154981	29338	247	184.566

Source: Number of Faculty Members by University, <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>

As seen in Table 2, the number of female academics decreases as the title level increases. While the number of female academics in the first step of the academic title, research assistant, is higher than the number of male academics, the balance deteriorates towards the title of professor. Among the factors affecting this situation, demographic variables such as age, marital status and number of children are effective, as well as metaphors such as glass ceiling syndrome and pipeline (hole pipe/leaky pipe).

According to YÖK's statistics for 2021, there are 10 thousand 11 female professors in Türkiye. The proportion of female professors in Türkiye, which is 32.5%, surpasses the average of EU countries with 20.8% and is equal to the USA with 32.5%. Moreover, with 45 percent of female faculty members, Türkiye surpasses the EU average of 41.3 percent and the US average of 42.5 percent (YÖK, 2021). This shows that women in Türkiye are not excluded from academia and that the proportion of women in academia is equivalent to the standards of industrialized Western countries (Adak, 2018: 27).

To increase the contributions of women in scientific research, the following should be done (Akçığit et al., 2023: 69).

- All kinds of practices that may cause discrimination in research institutions should be avoided and policies should be implemented in this direction.
- Opportunities should be created for women to go abroad and scholarships should be given.
- Women researchers in Türkiye should be encouraged to participate in national and international congresses/symposiums and various meetings that will contribute to their development.
- Informing all segments of the society that the negative mindset in society, such as the idea that women's place is at home, is wrong, and pursuing policies to end gender-based discrimination between women and men.

2. CONCLUSION

The first condition for sustainable economic growth and development is equal participation of women and men in the labour force. For this purpose, it should be emphasised that gender-based discrimination in society should be eliminated. In today's world where working life has undergone radical changes, one of the opportunities brought by digitalization is the widespread use of flexible working models, which is expected to increase women's employment. The increase in women's employment will increase the added value in the country and the reflection on the country's economy will be positive. Türkiye ranks 129th among 146 countries in the Global Gender Equality Index and 36th among 38 OECD countries, with the lowest female labour force participation rate. Contrary to this negative picture, it is seen that the number of female academics in Türkiye exceeds the average of EU countries. Undoubtedly, this situation is both positive and pleasing. Although this situation is promising for women academics in Türkiye, the equality between women and men in research and teaching positions, which is the first stage of academic life, does not mean that women do not face gender discrimination in academia. As the hierarchical level increases, it is seen that male academics are more likely to be in senior management positions. While situations such as age, marital status, number of children, etc. prevent the promotion of female academics, metaphors such as glass ceiling syndrome, and pipeline (hole/leaky pipe) are factors affecting the promotion of female academics or taking part in senior management positions. Even though women's participation in working life increases every day, they are prevented from reaching senior executive positions. For this reason, every woman should know and recognize the obstacles in front of them both while continuing their education and in business life. In particular, they should have information about what the glass ceiling syndrome- leaky pipe, which is among the factors that

prevent women's employment, means, in which situations it is seen, and what its causes are. If they are exposed to the glass ceiling by the institution they work for, they should know the steps they should take in the face of this situation.

The fact that women are more involved in senior management positions in academia shows how close society is to justice, equality, and equal opportunity. When the literature studies are examined, women, who assume a series of responsibilities and struggle in every moment and field of life, have been the subject of many studies with the problems they face in academia, where they face direct or indirect gender discrimination as in other areas of employment. In this context, giving more space to the reasons preventing women's promotion in higher education institutions will shed light on the way to increase women's employment in academia.

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