

The Reasons for Women's Labour Force Non-Participation; Empirical Evidence from Turkey

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Abstract

As is well known fact that women's full integration into the labour market plays a key role for their personal and social development and also serves to increase the general economic efficiency of the country. However, Turkish women's participation in paid work is at the lowest level among the European Union countries. According to the latest official statistics the labour force participation rate is 71.05 % for males and 30.8% for females (TUIK, 2015). The existing literature relating to women's labour force participation in Turkey is mostly based on analyzing main determinants of the participation decision and the nature and the characteristics of women in labour force (Gedikli, 2014; Dayioglu & Kirdar, 2010; Ercan and et al; 2010; Goksel, 2012, Ilkcaracan, 2012). There has been paid a little attention to the analysis of female labour market inactivity especially the reasons of women's non-participation in the labour market. Therefore the purpose of this study is to examine the characteristics of non-working women in Bandirma in Turkey. Using micro level data, we explores the main determinants of non-working decision of women specifically, the role of family age, income, education, dependent child age, marital status, and also social and traditional norms. The results indicate that being married, childcare responsibilities, education, and social and traditional norms are very important factors that affect women's decision to work. The findings of this study aim o provide useful material for policy makers and researchers to specify policy implication to increase women's labour participation in Turkey.

Keywords: women's labour force non-participation, gender, Turkey,

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Introduction

As is well known fact that women's full integration into the labour market plays a key role for their personal and social development and also serves to increase the general economic efficiency of the country. However, the important characteristic of the Turkish labour market over the past decades has been the low participation of females in the labour force. According to the official statistics although the male labour participation rate of 71.5% is close to developed countries average, but the female labour participation rate, which is 30.8%, makes Turkey to be the lowest among OECD countries (TUIK, 2015). Expectedly, women's share in employment is also low in Turkey. Share of women and men's employment in total employment is 26.8 and 65%, respectively.

The low labour force participation rate of female in the Turkish labour market has been recognized and investigated by many researchers (Ilkcaracan, 1998; Tansel 2002; Ince & Demir, 2006; Taymaz 2010; Goksel, 2012). These studies emphasize that the reason behind this low participation rate can be categorized into several factors, such as the on-going structural changes in the Turkish economy. During the last 50 years Turkey has been experiencing huge transformation from an agriculture economy to an industrial one. This has been accomplished with fast urbanization and has affected the composition of the labour force. In addition there have been social changes, such as increasing educational attainments and opportunities and sectoral changes that moving from agricultural sector to service or industrial sector entails. In Turkey, migration from rural to urban affected negatively the female participation rate more than males because, while women have traditionally a source of employment in agriculture as unpaid family workers, they cannot participate in urban labour force after the migration (Palaz, 2005).

Other factors such as unemployment rates, economic crises, low educational attainments and skill levels of women, and prevailing cultural norms that exclude women from associating with non-kin males may also play a role in the low participation rates of women in the Turkish labour market (Dayioglu, 2000; Ince & Demir, 2006; Goksel, 2012). In addition, the failure of official labour statistics to cover workers in the informal sectors needs to be taken into account when analysing the patterns of the female labour force participation rate in urban areas where uneducated and unskilled women work in informal sectors.

In addition, according to latest data, 59% of women who are not in labour force had stated that this situation is a result of their engagement with domestic affairs. When the wages of women are lower than the reservation wages (the total value of services women produce at home), women give up participating in labour force (TUIK, 2015). Ozar and Gunluk-Senesen (1998) examined the factors influencing women's decision not to enter the labour force in urban Turkey and found that the role of women as "wives and mothers" in the household is the most important determinants of non-participation of women. They state that "the gradual fall in fertility rates since the 1950s does not seem to have a significant impact on women's labour force participation. The widely accepted norm is that looking after children is the responsibility of women and lack of child-care facilities are considered to have a significant impact on this outcome" (Ozar & Gunluk-Senesen, 1998; 322). In consistent with these findings Palaz (2005) finds that the most important reason not to

enter the labour force is being a housewife for women (71.2 %). Other reasons such as being student, retired or disabled and ill etc. have little effect on not to enter labour force. However, for men, being retired and student are the most important factors not to join the labour force.

The existing literature relating to women's labour force participation in Turkey is mostly based on analyzing main determinants of the participation decision and the nature and the characteristics of women in labour force (Gedikli, 2014; Dayioglu & Kirdar, 2010; Ercan, Hosgor & Yilmaz, 2010; Goksel, 2009; Ilkcaracan, 2012). There has been paid a little attention to the analysis of female labour market inactivity especially the reasons of women's non-participation in the labour market. Therefore the purpose of this study is to examine the characteristics of non-working women in Bandirma in Turkey. Using micro level data, we explore the main determinants of non-working decision of women specifically, the role of family age, income, education, dependent child age, marital status, and also social and traditional norms. The findings of this study are intended to provide useful material for policy makers and researchers to specify policy implication to increase women's labour participation in Turkey.

The remainder of this paper is as follows; we discuss the materials and methods in the next section. In the third section, we present the findings of descriptive statistics, and the association between non-participation decision to paid work and demographic variables such as gender, year at school, marital status, having children and also cultural norms. The final section draws concluding remarks and some policy implications.

Materials and Methods

This descriptive study on decisions of women's non-participation into labour force was conducted in Bandirma where located in the southern Marmara region of Turkey and a district of Balikesir, with 143,000 inhabitants (TUIK, 2015). Bandirma is a commercial centre and its harbour serves as a transit point for trade between Istanbul and Izmir. There is also agriculture produced in the surrounding areas, producing products like cereals, meat and sheep wool and meat, cattle, grain and mineral boracites.

The target population for this study is defined as non-working women living 50,000 dwelling in the central of Bandirma. The minimum required sample size was determined using Cochran's sample size determination formula. It was calculated as 420 based on the data collected using a categorical instrument with an acceptable margin of error of 5% and an alpha level of 0.05 (Cochran, 1977). The survey was anonymous and asked respondents to take part in the study between March and June in 2013. In total, 420 questionnaires were delivered and 390 of them returned. The initial examination of the returned questionnaires showed that five were incomplete; these were therefore excluded from the data analysis process. The number of usable questionnaires was 385.

The data collection instrument used in the study was developed by considering earlier studies conducted with similar purposes. It consisted of three major sections. The first section sought information about the demographic characteristics of non-working

women in the variables of age, education and marital status, marital age, and age of children. The second section elicited information about the economic status of non-working women in the family in the variables of number of households, monthly income of family, number of working in the family, being a paid employment previously. The third section of the instrument sought information about social and cultural values of non-working women in the variables of the control of household income, sharing the responsibility for childcare and chores in the family, and the most favourable sector for women. The fourth section of the instrument discovered the main determinants of non-working women's paid work in the variables of intention to working in a paid job, the reason of leaving their paid job for previously working women, the reason not to enter the paid work, and the reason of inability to find work.

Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 15.0). The frequency and percentage distributions and Pearson chi-square analysis were used to accomplish our objectives stated in the first section of the study.

Research Findings

The findings on demographic characteristics of the study group are as follows; of 385 women in the sample, the majority were married (81.8%), and the rest were divorced, widowed or single. Most women's marital age was between 19-22 (43.8%), while 29 % of women were married before age of 18 and less than 18. Fifty-two percent had children between age of 18 and over, 24 percent had children between age of 7-17 and only 14 percent of women had children between age of 6 and less than 6. A large portion of the respondents (34%) were age between 40-44 and over 45 years old. In terms of education, 5.5% of the respondents were only literate. A large portion of the respondents (36.4%) held an elementary school, 18.4 % secondary school, and 28.6% high school degree while only 10.2 % had university education.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Non-Working Women

Age	Number	%
≤29	43	11.1
30-39	101	26.2
40-49	129	33.5
≥50	112	29.2
TOTAL	385	100.0
Education		
Literate	21	5.5
Elementary School	140	36.4
Secondary School	71	18.4
High School	110	28.6
Vocational School	19	4.9
University	24	5.3
Total	385	100.0
Marital Status		
Married	315	81.8
Single	23	5.8
Divorced	10	2.6
Widow	37	9.6
TOTAL	385	100.0
Marital Age		
≤ 18	112	29.0
19-22	169	43.8
23-29	83	21.5
≥ 30	21	5.7
TOTAL	385	100.0
Age of Children		
0-6	53	13.8
7-17	92	23.9
≥ 18	199	51.7
No children	41	10.6
TOTAL	385	100.0

Table 2 indicates the information about the economic status of non-working women in the family. According to the survey result about 60 percent of women had nuclear family refers to the family group consisting of 3-4 number of households. From the table, the majority of family (69.6 %) had only one working person and only 18.7 percent had two working person in the family. This result is not surprising though women in this research group are not in paid employment. When we consider monthly income of family only 11.4 percent of the family's monthly income is very low at the level of minimum wage and less than minimum wage. About 60 percent of family have between 1000 TL and 3000 TL monthly income which are middle income level and nearly 13 percent of family have high income level in the research group. Fifty-three of the respondents stated that they have no paid employment experiences at all. On the other hand forty-six percent of women said that they had working experiences previously and most of these experiences occurred as full time employees (21 %) and casual workers (13 %).

Table 2. The Economic Status of Non-Working Women in the Family

number of households	Number	%
1	16	4.2
2	65	16.9
3	98	25.5
4	129	33.5
5	60	15.6
≥6	17	4.4
TOTAL	385	100.0
monthly income of family		
Under minimum wage	2	0.5
Minimum wage	42	10.9
750 - 1000 TL	50	13.0
1000-1500 TL	80	20.8
1500- 2000 TL	79	20.5
2000- 3000 TL	81	21.0
3000 - 4000 TL	20	5.2
≥4000 TL	30	7.8
TOTAL	384	99.7
number of working in the family		
Retired	23	6.0
1 person	268	69.6
2 person	72	18.7
3 person	17	4.4
4 person	4	1.0
5 person	1	0.3
TOTAL	385	100.0
being a paid employment previously		
Full time employee	85	22.1
Fixed term employee	14	3.6
Self-employed	27	7.0
Casual workers	50	13.0
Unpaid workers	2	0.5
Being a paid employment in total	178	46.2
Not being a paid employment before	207	53.8
TOTAL	385	100.0

Table 3 demonstrates the social and cultural values of non-working women which also shows us social and traditional beliefs in Turkey. Nearly half of the respondents in our study said that their household income's control doing by their husband. On the other hand about 34 percent of women expressed that their family income's control decisions made by together with their husbands. From the table, a majority of respondents (87.5 %) think that family responsibilities such as childcare and house work duties should be shared with spouse, only 12.5 percent of women believe that these kinds of duties should be done by women. According to the women in this study group the most desired and ideal sector for women to work were services (75.8 %). Women think that service sector is more suitable for women that industrial and agricultural sectors.

Table 3. Social and Cultural Values of non-working Women

	Number	%	for
control of household income			
My husband	178		46.2
My own self	66		17.1
Together	134		34.8
TOTAL	378		98.2
Sharing the responsibility for childcare and chores in the family			
Family responsibilities should be shared with spouse	337		87.5
Family responsibilities should be done by woman	48		12.5
TOTAL	385		100.0
The most favourable sector for women			
Industry /Manufacturing	16		4.2
Agriculture	22		5.7
Service	292		75.8
Others	52		13.5
TOTAL	382		99.2

Table 4 indicates that the most important reasons for previously working women to leave their paid job is getting a married (12%), low wage (10%), and having children (8 %). It seems that the reasons such as personal, being fed up with work and being fired or closing down have little effect on women's decision.

Table 4. The reason of leaving their paid job for previously working women

Reasons	Number	%
Marriage	48	12,5
Low wage	39	10.1
Having a children	31	8.0
Close down	11	2.9
Be fired	10	2.6
Being fed up with work	10	2.6
Discouraged	7	1.8
Personal reasons	6	1.6
Husband's no permission	6	1.6

Why some women participate to the labour market while others do not? What are the factors shaping the women's decision of participating paid work? These two questions answered by women in this study as follows; Sixty-four percent of women affirmed that they have no intention to work in a paid job, but thirty-six percent of women do want to work in the labour market. Women who do not want to participate into labour market asked why they do not want to work, most of them said (22.9 %) it is their own choices. Second important reason were household chores (22.3 %), and 10.9 % of women said their husband did not give permission to work them. Other reasons such as being fed up, inadequate education and worse working conditions also some effect on women's decisions.

Table 5. The reason not to enter the paid work

Reasons	%
My own choice	22.9
Household chores	22.3
Husband's no permission	10.9
Other	6.5
Being fed up with work	4.4
Inadequate education	2.9
Worse working conditions	1.3

Some of women in research group (36 %) who wanted to work in the labour market believe that having less experiences and less education are the most important reasons of inability to find a job. Respondents think that third important reason for inability to find a job is being too old. This reason is not surprising as our sample group's average age is 40 and over 40's. In addition women assert that being married and interrupting of work make difficult to find a job in the labour market. Some women also mention that they do not know how to find a job in proper way. Finally minority of respondents think that being a woman is the reason of inability to find a job.

Table 6. The reason of inability to find a job

Reasons	%
Less experience	69.8
Less education	67.6
Being too old	50.8
Being married	48.8
interruption of work	39.6
To not know the way to job search	37.2
Being a woman	26.6

Chi-square was computed in order to examine the relationship between women's decision of non-participation into labour market and selected demographic characteristics. The results of analysis showed that there were statistically significant relationship between women's decision of work and age ($\chi^2=80.87$, $p=.000$), education ($\chi^2= 27.24$ $p=.000$), age of children ($\chi^2= 38,29$ $p=.000$) and marital status ($\chi^2= 27,89$, $p=.000$). Being married, less education and increasing age decrease the women's decision of participation into labour market. According to the non parametric test results women who had high school degree want to work on the other hand married women and women age 40 and over are reluctant to enter labour force. While it is expected that the presence of young children decrease women's labour supply as non-affordable child care facilities outside the family, in this study contrast to previous studies we found that women who had children age 7 and 17 and 18 and over do not want to participate into labour market however women who had young children age 6 and less than six want to work in the labour market. This could be the factor of economic need and age of women who are relatively younger than women who had older children.

These findings are also consistent with previous studies involving women's labour force participation decision. For instance, Ozar and Gunluk-Senesen (1998) have analysed the reasons of not participating to the labour force for Turkish women and explored that women's role, as wives and mothers was the most important factor influencing the women's labour supply decisions in urban areas of Turkey. In same manner, Lisaniler and Bhatti (2005:) studied determination of women's labour force participation in North Cyprus and found that marital status is an important factor which increases the value of non-market activities for women. Women are expected to become a good mother and a homemaker while men are expected to be the breadwinner and the head of the household in patriarchal family structures.

The research results of present study also lead to the conclusion that women's education level is the one of the main factors determining women's labour supply decisions. The higher the level of education, higher gets the likelihood of women's participation. As mentioned previous studies (Lisaniler & Bhatti, 2005; Palaz, Karagol & Masateci, 2006; Goksel, 2009; Ilkkaracan, 2012) neoclassical economists consider education as the key determinant of women entering economic life there is a positive relationship between the level of education and the labour force participation rates.

In terms of age our result also are similar to early studies of women's labour force analysis which emphasize the labour force participation rate of women rise steadily

and reach a small peak at the age of 20-24 and begin to fall from this age category. This reflects that the majority of women do not or cannot re-enter the labour market after an interruption in employment (Ozar & Gunluk-Senesen, 1998; Palaz, 2005).

According to the economic status of non-working, a statistically significant relationship was determined between women's decision of non-participation into labour market and monthly income ($\chi^2= 23.57$ $p=.001$). On the other hand there is no significant relationship between women's decision of non-participation into labour market and number of households, and number of working in the family. Increasing household monthly income decreases the women's participation into labour market. Since women are mostly expected to be the homemaker and the caretaker, the reservation wage (the value woman places on her time at home) has been high for women preventing the participation of women to the labour market (Lisaniler & Bhatti, 2005:211).

In terms of social and cultural values of non-working women, we found that there is a significant relationship between women's decision of non-participation into labour market and the control of household income ($\chi^2= 41.2$ $p=.000$) and sharing the responsibility for childcare and chores in the family ($\chi^2= 74.1$ $p=.000$). This result reflects to the traditional division of work overburdens women with the unpaid reproductive tasks i.e. cleaning, cooking, child and elderly care etc. that women are usually restrained from the labour market. As is mentioned in previous studies conservative cultural values negatively affect women's working decision (Kardam & Toksoz, 2004; Contreras & Plaza, 2010; Goksel, 2012; O'Neil & Bilgin, 2013). For instance Contreras and Plaza (2010:27) states that "the more the women have internalized machista and conservative cultural values the less they participate in the labour market". Furthermore O'Neil and Bilgin (2013) shows that traditional roles and patriarchal mentalities lead to lower women's willing to participate into labour market.

Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this study is to examine the characteristics of non-working women in Bandirma in Turkey. We made a descriptive analysis using the statistics drawn from the questionnaire in the city of Bandirma and its peripheries. Using our survey, we explored the main determinants of non-working decision of women specifically, the role of family age, income, education, dependent child age, marital status, and also social and traditional norms. A profile of women in the research area can be drawn as 40 and over 40 years old married women with an under high school degree and had children age 18 and over.

The findings of the study suggest that age, education, age of children, marital status, household monthly income, and social and cultural values are very important factors that affect women's decision to work. Women in this study states that the most important reasons of leaving their paid job is getting a married low wage and having children. The responsibilities attributed women by cultural and traditional values such as looking after children and household duties also affect their participation to the paid work. Women who have lower education skills and less training have difficulties to find decent job for living. Additionally some of women believe that

having less experience and less education are the most important reasons of inability to find a job.

Our observations from this survey lead some implications for public policy. The first implication is related to education and human skills of women. In fact, women have disadvantages to find decent work in labour market due to their lower educational level. In addition, women lack of experience and low skills prevent women to start up a decent and regular job. Increasing women's education and human skills can help to build confidence to look for paid job in labour market. Therefore, as it is being done today in Turkey, Government can provide direct education for women and support private provision by tax incentives and grants. Incentives such those would lead to increase women's participation into paid work.

The second implication is related to household responsibilities of women. Government can also help women by providing childcare facilities because as Kau and Rubin (1981) suggest they are very important instruments to increase women's participation into paid work. We believe that raising women's educational attainments and reducing and equalizing the burden of household responsibilities and childcare activities could have pervasive effects greater than any other policies such as affirmative action or equal employment opportunity strategies, to increase women's labour force participation. In addition, policies to harmonize employment and family responsibilities for women and men to promote egalitarian sharing of domestic and community responsibilities are very important to increase women's participation as well.

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