

An Overview on Women Employment in Public Transportation of Turkey

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Abstract

The existence of the underemployment of women makes crucial the fact of examining their current position in businesses which are traditionally male-dominated. This constitutes the employment profile on particular industries and helps to find strategies in order to decrease gender segregation. Public transportation sector is one of the important sectors, on the basis of which, the local government is on employer position and could be role model in employee selection process and provide homogeneous work environment based on sex. By analyzing the presence of women in public transportation sector in Europe and Turkey, it was found that they are relatively low and lead us to the same conclusion for countries taken as a sample in this study. The conclusions and suggestions derived from these findings.

Key words: Gender stereotypes, women employment, public transportation sector, Turkey

1. INTRODUCTION

The competition intensified with the pressure of globalization in the world economy. The modernization of labor force became obligatory for most countries in order to improve competitiveness power. At that point women employment, which has excluded from labor market for many years, has been recognized as one of the driving force for economic development (Ecevit, 2010). Despite the fact that women make up almost the half of the world population, they cannot have opportunity to represent the same proportion in economic activities and employment. There are many reasons for underemployment of women, such as lack of corporate initiatives for work-life balance of employees, lack of political strategies to increase women employment, job description and conditions that reveals "male-dominant" sectors and business environment and existing cultural aspects. Also, gender stereotypes have to be taken into account as a main reason.

Gender stereotypes are not only considered as a barrier to women participation public transportation sector, it is one of the main reasons behind the general women employment issues. Sex is a biological term that contains anatomical, hormonal and physiological differences and distinguish male and female according to these differences (Ahl, 2006). The term of gender is used to specify behaviors, duties and attitudes that society expects from men and women. That is, while sex is a biological concept, gender is socio-cultural concept. Gender and gender roles are shaped by cultural values held by the society and reflects the expectations on how to behave, how to look, how to act, where to work, what is good, what is ugly and even how men and women should think about (Cüceloglu, 2000). The fact that human is social being and gender roles are shaped them as 'male' and 'female' in social structure. In other words, societies categorize individuals according to their sex and attribute some stereotypic characteristics, set of roles and tasks to these categories.

All societies host these gender roles and there are slight differences on these roles between each society. Men are considered as strong, brave, competitive, aggressive and responsible of being the 'breadwinner', whereas women are considered as compassionate, emotional, sensitive, vulnerable and responsible for taking care of elderly people and children at home. Even though today's women have contributed to household incomes both inside and outside the paid labor force, the socio-cultural meaning of women working has long been different from that of men working. The daily responsibility of parenting and the permanent act of babysitting are still considered the main responsibilities of women. Gender-related roles and form of learned stereotypes are transferred from generation to generation and 'gender separation process "continues for years. In spite of that forming, transferring and changing of these learned stereotypes takes many years. The most difficult changes take place into traditionally male domains of the business and professional world. Transportation sector is one of the mostly male-dominated industries in all over the world and examining the rate of women in traditionally male occupations is crucial for further theoretical and practical steps. The objective of the present study is to review the literature of women employment for European countries and Turkey and moving beyond general women employment issues by examination of women participation in public transportation sector which is considered highly male-dominated industry.

2. WOMEN EMPLOYMENT

Attitudes toward women employment can be considered as 'segregation' or 'exclusion'. Exclusion in employment concept means that situations where certain groups, including gender groups, within a society are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against. Gender segregation describes the distinction as 'male work' or 'female work' on occupations and makes the hierarchy that renders one gender superior to the other one (Walby, 1990). Exclusion and segregation do not only occur in private contexts, but also public institutions are seen to be effective in the formation of attitudes and thoughts about gender inequality. The analysis on women labor force revealed that family, religious group, political and legal structures, educational institutions and the mass media are all responsible for the norms and values that raise discrimination and legitimization on the basis of gender.

Human Development Report (2015) indicated that there are various areas such as education, health, social services and employment in which gender segregation can be found. The researches revealed that globally women earn 24 percent less than men and nearly 50 percent of the employed women are in vulnerable employment. Women statistics in Turkey revealed that illiterate female population is 5 times more than illiterate male population, women earned less income than men in all education levels, women participated less in political life than men and labor force participation rate of population aged 15 and over was 71.3% for males and 30.3% for females.

Table 1. Labor force based on sex between 2006-2015 (in thousands)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Turkey										
Male	16 597.8	16 872.1	17 254.4	17 608.9	18 038.5	18 674.2	18 957.1	19 418.3	20 051.6	20 455.0
Female	5 786.9	5 896.9	6 217.7	6 715.0	7 249.8	7 749.3	8 064.4	8 543.0	8 721.9	9 198.9
E. U.										
Male	129 144.0	130 697.5	131 667.4	131 469.0	130 958.5	130 144.1	130 739.9	130 749.6	131 371.3	-
Female	104 631.5	106 551.7	107 868.2	108 786.1	108 746.7	109 031.5	110 158.8	110 758.6	111 720.5	-
U.S.A										
Male	81 255.0	82 136.3	82 519.6	82 123.0	81 984.8	81 974.6	82 326.9	82 666.8	82 882.3	83 620.4
Female	70 172.4	70 987.9	71 767.1	72 019.2	71 904.0	71 642.1	72 647.9	72 722.3	73 039.4	73 509.5
OECD Total										
Male	324 827.2	327 832.3	330 625.8	331 164.9	331 646.3	333 068.0	335 287.2	336 741.0	339 014.3	-
Female	248 327.0	251 463.1	254 761.0	257 481.8	258 858.5	260 724.3	264 654.1	267 073.8	269 224.6	-

Note: The data were obtained from OECD Employment Outlook doi: <https://data.oecd.org>

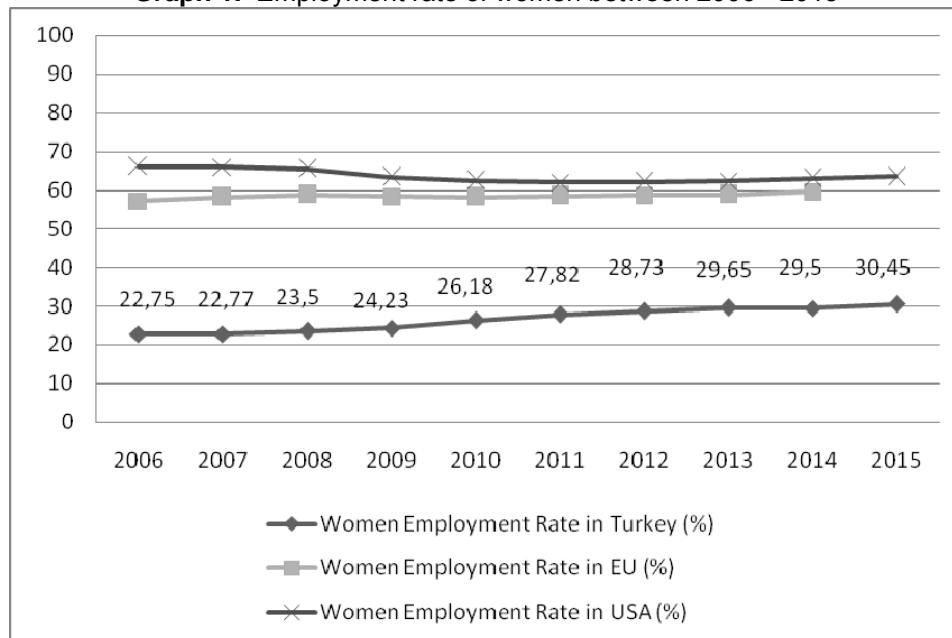
Table 2. Employment rate of male and female between 2006-2015 (in thousands)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Turkey										
Male	15.172.9	15.392.3	15.596.0	15.402.5	16.168.5	17.130.5	17.511.2	17.878.3	18.241.0	18.577.8
Female	5.260.4	5.357.5	5.597.1	5.868.3	6.424.2	6.968.8	7.308.1	7.641.5	7.689.7	8.040.7
E. U.										
Male	119.410.7	122.125.0	123.038.8	119.747.5	118.432.8	117.752.8	117.187.4	116.664.3	118.093.9	-
Female	95.278.7	98.238.1	99.836.7	99.204.8	98.433.1	98.465.8	98.619.7	98.734.1	100.190.4	-
U.S.A										
Male	77.501.6	78.254.3	77.486.2	73.669.7	73.359.2	74.290.3	75.555.3	76.352.6	77.692.3	79.130.6
Female	66.925.6	67.792.4	67.876.2	66.207.8	65.704.9	65.578.8	66.913.7	67.756.7	68.613.0	69.702.8
OECD Total										
Male	306 017.2	310 189.0	311 330.3	303 428.1	303 554.5	306 749.4	309 010.1	310 398.8	314 402.0	-
Female	232 513.6	236 767.3	239 449.2	237 790.1	238 191.1	240 114.8	243 475.7	245 961.0	249 167.4	-

Note: The data were obtained from OECD Employment Outlook doi: <https://data.oecd.org>

The OECD Employment Report revealed that the employment rate of women relative to men is low in all over the world. The proportion of women employment (Table 1) in Turkey is behind the European Union and OECD countries, while the labor force of women is increasing year by year (Table 2) (OECD, 2015). When we compare women employment rate of Turkey with Europe or U.S.A we can see that Turkey remains far behind since last ten years.

Graph 1. Employment rate of women between 2006 - 2015



According to the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report (2012), Turkey was ranked 124 out of 135 countries in 2012. In economic participation and economic opportunities for women, the gender gap in Turkey is the widest in Europe and the Central Asia region. Even though Turkey is one of the selected emerging economies among OECD members, Turkey is ranked last with respect to women's economic participation (KEIG, 2013).

There is also discrimination in labor market based on the men-labor-intensive and women-labor-intensive industries. For example; while the auto and oil industries are male labor-intensive sectors, the textile and some service industries are observed as female labor-intensive sectors. In this case it is the basic gender-based discrimination which brings about social enforcement on women to work in these given sectors. As a result women labor that constricted in few sectors reduces the value of the work done and leads to low wage. All these obtained results require the identification of women employment profile in each sector, define the missing points and state strategies that predispose gender equality in labor market.

3. WOMEN EMPLOYMENT IN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SECTOR

Urban life becomes the experience of increasing number of people with the globalization and rapidly changing world. The majority of the world population had lived in rural areas that associated with agricultural productions throughout the history. But between 2005 and 2010 urbanization has gained increasing rate globally and at first the population of urban areas exceeded the population of rural areas. Turkey has also experienced similar transition between 1980 and 1985 and the urban population share within the overall population increased to 52.8 %. According to forecasts of United Nations, in 2050 total urban population will reach 70% across the world and 84% in Turkey.

Local governments develop city plans in order to sort out complex, messy and heterogeneous everyday life of cities. Within these plans, building up the safe, less costly and nature-friendly public transportation channels is of great importance. Public transport sector has become a rapidly growing service sector, providing job opportunities and professional use with varying standards of living.

UITP - International Association of Public Transport reported that employment in public transport has reached to 13 million people worldwide on 2009. This employment rate is higher (12 million) than the air transport sector which is the other biggest industry in transportation (UITP, 2011). Despite the high rate of employment opportunities of public transportation sector, the profile of employee does not show homogeneity based on the gender.

In many respects and in many countries transportation sector have traditionally been regarded as 'no place for women'. According to UITP (2010) figures, the percentage of women employers in the public transport company serves approximately 17.5 % in European Union countries. This rate is dropped to 9.3% on the number of women who are employed as the driver. A higher share of women can be observed in the category of tram drivers.

Women employers can be seen in more commercial units and rarely in driving or technical jobs. There are many reasons expressed by companies such as thoughts about the lack of technical and engineering knowledge of women, women's housework and responsibilities such as child care will not be eligible to work in shift work, social beliefs and stereotypes about women driving skills and lack of strategies that encourage the women employment. However, many studies regarding the female and male differences in driving has demonstrated that women tend to drive calmly and less risky and their accident ratios are lower than the men (Özkan & Lajunen, 2006).

4. CONCLUSION

The fact that women participation in labor market is one of the important economic indicators for developing countries such as Turkey. Moreover, economic growth and development cannot be considered without women who constitute half of the labor force in Turkey. Gender inequality in economic field should be considered with other forms of socio-economic inequalities such as those of access to education, equal payment policies, improving facilities like nursery and pre-schools for child-care, compatible working hours and conditions, lowering the informal employment and increasing the active labor market training (vocational training, entrepreneurship training, on-the-job training).

Public transportation sector is one of the appropriate sectors because of the high employment opportunities to implement these strategies. UITP has addressed this challenge by setting out the ambitious objective of doubling the public transport market share worldwide by 2025. Local governments of some cities in Turkey such as Ankara, Mersin, Diyarbakir, Adana and Gaziantep also announced some job opportunities particularly for women in recent years. Although the government also has taken various measures in order to create employment opportunities in the formal sector and to remove gender related barriers to employment, the government policies are not enough alone to address the equality deficit.

Turkish government should provide better implementation of equal right laws, especially the equal pay principle, consider a more inclusive social security system for unpaid home-based and informal workers, establish care facilities and preschools in workplaces and assist work family balance. Gender considerations and the need to facilitate women's access to jobs should incorporate in Turkey transport policy. Ensuring gender equality in public institutions will help to set an example and be a model for companies in the private sector. Lastly, this generally accepted stereotype may be an obstacle to women's employment not only in public transport but also to other technical jobs. The change of long-standing stereotypes takes some time, but increasing the success stories of women employee and emphasize the issue would shortened that time.

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