

# Chapter 10

## Importance of Women Employment in Economy: The Case of Turkey

**Güner Koç Aytekin**  
Ufuk University, Turkey

### ABSTRACT

*Women, who make up half of the world's population, are one of the key elements for social progress and development. However, women's participation in economic life, the level of utilization from social and economic development, unfortunately, is not directly proportional to the population. In a global sense, women live profound inequalities in many ways such as the economy, education, health, and social, which in turn significantly affects global development in a negative way. Women taking part in economic life ensures participation of them in the workforce at the ideal level and increases employment which is one of the main requirements of sustainable growth and development and is also the key to achieving a sustainable and balanced structure of growth and development. The low level of female employment at international standards leads to structural, economic, and social negativity in many aspects for a country. In this chapter, Turkey's case is discussed by investigating the place and the importance of women in the economy.*

### INTRODUCTION

With the effect of the neoliberal policies applied together with the globalization process, the economic interventions of the countries have decreased since the 1980s and the labour market has increased in the context of providing the competitive advantage by reducing costs.

Despite the fact that half of the world's population is women, the level of women's participation in economic life and their benefits from social and economic development is not directly proportional to their population. Effective participation of women in the social and economic development process by increasing labour force participation and employment is one of the most important factors in achieving sustainable growth and development.

With the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Turkish women's movement has gained great momentum. As the result of the revolutions that took place under the leadership of the founder Mustafa

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-6301-3.ch010

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Kemal Atatürk, they obtained the right to choose and elect a deputy on 5 December 1934. In this respect, the recognition of women's rights has been provided before many countries such as Switzerland, Italy and France. These rights ensure that women have equal rights in social and cultural areas, in education, in law, in the family, in work, in the social arena and in politics. Thus, women are able to enjoy equal human rights.

M. Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, is not only a brilliant soldier who provides the liberation of his country, but also, at the same time, he respects to universal laws and freedoms. As a visionary leader he also has set out to create a country where women and men have equal rights and to pass it on to future generations.

### **A BRIEF LOOK AT THE GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES OF TURKEY IN THE CONTEXT AND IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

When Atatürk went to Anatolia to start the War of Independence, he only found poor people and primitive technology all along the country, and moreover, an agriculture economy which was primarily driven by the female population (Tokgöz, 1982: 35). Because of the great deal of male population which were involved in the independence war, women actively took part in economic activities. However, the Anatolian woman, especially because of many reasons caused by the socio-cultural structure, unfortunately did not deserve the right social position in the society. The issue of women taking part in the economic life, which is of key importance in the development of the countries, is one of the main issues that Atatürk has emphasized before the establishment of the new republic.

The words that Atatürk said in 1923 are very important: "The reason for the failure of our social societies comes from the indifference we show against women. Living means activity. Therefore, if an organ of a social community is active while another organ is inactive, that social community is paralyzed."

Atatürk brought the thoughts and politics of women and economy before the declaration of the Republic. In order to determine Turkey's Economic Policy (Tokgöz, 1982), Izmir Economic Congress was held on 17 February 1923. The statements of Atatürk in the opening speech of the Congress, are remarkable: "In order to bring the level of our new established country to the level that we desire, we have to give prime importance to the economy. Because our time is nothing more than an economic era. No matter how great political, military victories, they cannot be sustained unless they are crowned with economic victories. Economy means everything. Economy covers all the requirements in order to live, in order to be happy and in order to be a human being. It means agriculture, it means trade, and it means work. It means everything"

After two weeks of work, the Congress ended by issuing the "Economy Oath", which was unanimously accepted. In this sense, Izmir has become a symbol of the transition of economic liberation from a cosmopolitan economic structure to a national economic structure. Atatürk, in his words at the Izmir Economy Congress, has actually given great messages to the Turkish Nation. In this context, Atatürk strongly emphasizes the great struggle of the Turkish woman in the War of Independence with these words: "None of any woman of any nation in the World can say I worked hard more than Anatolian woman in leading my nation to salvation and welfare." Again, "If we need scientific development in society, it is necessary for both men and women to obtain them at the same time," and stated that women and men should act together in the development of society (Aysan A., 2014).

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