

Chapter 53

Women's Employment in Turkey's ICT Sector: An Examination From a Social Inclusion Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Women constitute one of the risk groups vulnerable to poverty; therefore, enabling their participation in the labor force is crucial to promoting social inclusion in a society. Employment in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector is widely known for being male-dominated, and recently women's participation has become an important subject. This chapter aims to examine women's employment in Turkey's ICT sector from 2009 to 2016, from a social inclusion perspective, by using various indicators. Comparisons with European Union (EU) countries provide perspective on tracking the progress of employment structure and education choices for ICT by gender. All indicators signify the existence of a gender gap resulting in low rates of inclusion of women in Turkey's ICT employment during the period. Examination of the reasons leads to making some policy recommendations to promote social inclusion of women in Turkey's ICT employment.

INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a rapidly growing sector throughout the world, and hence its weight and importance in the overall economy is rising. This expansion requires an examination of various aspects of the sector (Palvia, Baqir & Nemati, 2018). Employment represents the use of potential resources in an economy, making it one of the main economic issues, but it is also a social issue. The contribution of women to the labor force is crucial, both economically and socially (Dreze & Sen, 2002; Oxoby, 2009; Atkinson, 1998; Balaban, 2014).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-2405-6.ch053

The motivation for this study mainly arises from two facts. One is the exclusion of women from social and economic life, even in developed countries. In developing nations or less developed countries, the degree of exclusion of women is even greater. (Daly, 1989; Dedeoglu, 2009; Tezgel & Gokbayrak, 2013). Increasing the well-being of women and fostering economic and social development requires eliminating exclusion through social inclusion policies (Oxoby, 2009). In this context, encouraging women to participate in the labor force is crucial for fostering not only economic, but also social development. The other fact is that perceptions of jobs in ICT sector are generally accepted as men's jobs (Hodgkinson, 2000). Female participation in labor in the relevant sector is significantly low in many countries, signaling the exclusion of female labor. Both of those facts are even more crucial in emerging economies with respect to their dynamism. Indeed, the topic of social inclusion is not limited only to gender, employment, or the ICT sector. It is a broad concept that encompasses the exclusion of any individual or group from access to or participation in any right or institution (Balaban, 2014; Genc & Cat, 2013; Gunduz, 2007). However, this study focuses on ICT-sector employment from the perspective of gender, in the context of social inclusion.

Turkey is an emerging country that experiences high growth rates in the ICT sector, in parallel with the world (Dube, Dube, & Turan, 2015). Hence, the analysis of employment in the sector from the perspective of gender is crucial for such an emerging economy to comprehend the current state of the gender gap in sector employment. Determining the gender gap in the sector can lead to social policy recommendations for increasing the contribution of women to the ICT labor force. If Turkey succeeds in reducing the ICT employment gender gap in the future, its progress can serve as a success story for other emerging or developing countries. Turkey is specifically chosen for examination because of its cultural structure as a patriarchal country in which women are not expected to engage much in economic life. Hence, the cultural structure is another factor that results in exclusion of women from working life, causing women to live in poverty unless they live under the protection of men (Dedeoglu, 2009). This situation makes it even harder for women to engage in working life. In this context, by examining women's participation in Turkey's ICT employment, this study approaches social inclusion from the perspectives of gender, employment, and the ICT sector. Since the literature lacks studies from all these perspectives, to the best of the author's knowledge, focusing on a single emerging country such as Turkey would contribute to the existing literature. In addition, this study would create benefits for practical use by policy designers.

This study aims to analyze the contribution of women in the ICT sector in Turkey from 2009 to 2016, to examine the participation of women in the labor force and the change in female employment in the sector. Since education shapes future employment structure, the study also analyzes female participation in education in the relevant field. After that, Turkey's position is compared with European Union (EU) countries for the period. The proxies used in this study are the share of women in employment and among ICT specialists, the share of women with ICT education, and the share of women in ICT-related education.

The objective of this study is to seek answers to the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How did female employment in ICT in Turkey change from 2009 to 2016?

Research Question 2: How did the position of Turkey change in terms of social inclusion, compared to EU countries in the period analyzed?

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