

Chapter 1

Information and Communication Technologies and Feminization U Hypothesis: Empirical Analysis for Turkey

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ABSTRACT

The use and dissemination of information and communication technologies contribute to the socio-economic development of countries. Due to information and communication technology improvements, remote working can help to engage different social groups in the labour force. This chapter aims to analyse the effect of information and communication technologies on women's participation in the labour market, considering other essential factors and testing the validity of the Feminization U hypothesis. For the analysis, the author employed panel data on 12 regions of Turkey over 2013-2020. Findings indicate that female internet usage increases women's participation in the labour market, and the Feminization U hypothesis is invalid. Policymakers should develop measures to improve information and communication technologies services to encourage female labour force participation.

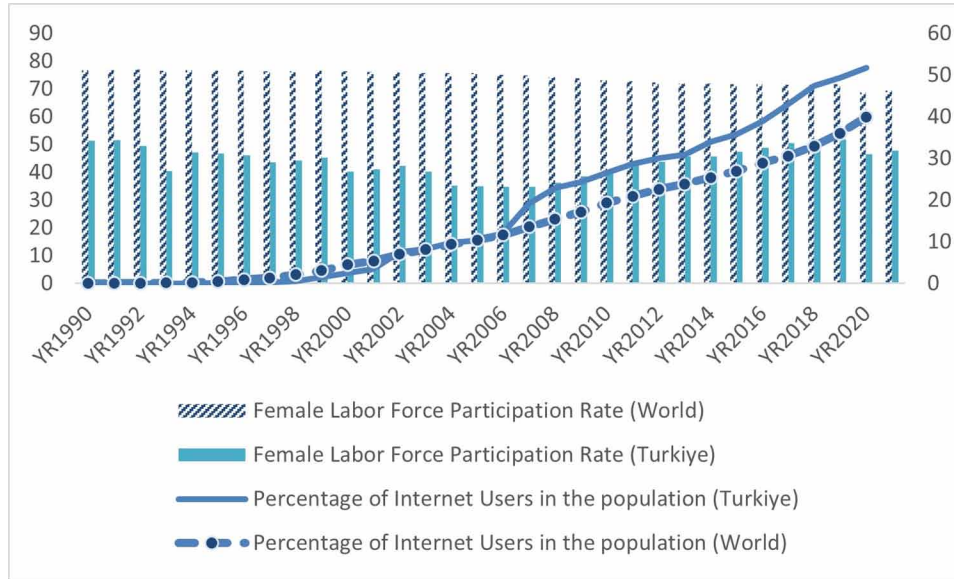
INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have spread rapidly all over the World during the last 30 years (Valberg, 2020). For example, as shown in Figure 1, the percentage of internet users in the world population has increased from 0.05% in 1990 to nearly 60% in 2020 globally (The World Bank, 2022a). The use and dissemination of ICTs contribute to the socio-economic development of countries through providing rapid information dissemination, easy access to information, cross-border knowledge, and technology transfer, creating job opportunities, increasing productivity, enabling online services related to education, health, finance, and government, among many others and remote working style-based

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Figure 1. Percentage of individuals using the internet in the population and female labor force participation (FLFP) rate

Source: Own construction using data from World Bank World Development Indicators (The World Bank, 2022a, 2022b)



employment opportunities, digitalising economy, and globalising skills (Tüzemen, Barış-Tüzemen, & Çelik, 2021; Valberg, 2020; Watson, Corliss, & Le, 2018). Remote working has been widely discussed not only starting with the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic but because of technological improvements which has made it possible. However, the discussion has intensified following the pandemic. Due to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) improvements, remote working can help engage different social groups in the labour force. One such group is women. In societies, social norms, the structure of the country, and gender-based labour division may impede women's active involvement in formal economic activities in addition to many other factors (Tüzemen et al., 2021). ICT use can increase female labour force participation (FLFP) by reducing the effect of these social, cultural, and religious obstacles, removing time and mobility constraints, and increasing productivity and output (Valberg, 2020; Watson et al., 2018). It can also reduce the impact of glass ceilings by providing innovative solutions for better positions related to women's employment and, therefore, ensure gender-balanced career development and fewer earning inequalities (Brussevich et al., 2018). There are many benefits of ICT use that induce engagement of women in the labour force, such as easy information access, job creation, lower transaction costs, and promotion of inclusiveness, transparency, flexibility, and innovation in the labour market (Ngoa & Song, 2021; Suhaida, Nurulhuda, & Yap, 2013; Valberg, 2020). However, in many G20 countries, there is evidence of a significant digital gender gap which limits benefits obtained from digitalisation and ICT use (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018).

Moreover, there are various factors affecting women's participation in the labour market shown by previous literature, such as economic development, financial development, noneconomic factors (for example, religion, governance, social norms, democracy, culture), household appliance ownership, education level and the fertility rate among many others (Ngoa & Song, 2021). Economic growth was shown to affect FLFP by previous studies. Some studies showed a U-shaped relation, while others found that the

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