



Evaluation of Cultural Dimensions and Barriers to Employment of Rural Women

Mert Bastas^{1}, Didem Aydindag²*

¹Near East University, Cyprus

²Kyrenia University, Cyprus, Email: didem.aydindag@kyrenia.edu.tr

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 08 July 2019

Received in revised form 10 Nov 2019

Accepted 26 Jan 2020

Keywords:

Cultural Barriers, Women Employment, Rural Women

ABSTRACT

Employment is one of the essential consequences of the expansion of economic and cultural development in society. However, there is an imbalance in the gender structure of the society of Turkey in the field of employment. In this regard, one of the most important factors for lack of balance is cultural barriers to the employment of women. Improving the employment of rural women and increasing their abilities in society are significantly important in economic development along with increased household income. In addition, increasing the knowledge and attitude of the family toward the employment of rural women plays a crucial role in the development of entrepreneurship culture in villages. Nonetheless, there are still cultural barriers such as fanaticism, prejudice, the dominance of men and lack of attention to the activity and work of women in society. According to the results of the study, the society's attitude to women's responsibilities, discrimination and attitude of a community toward women, the culture of patriarchy and internalization of attitude in women were among the most important cultural barriers to employment of women in Turkey, especially in rural areas.

1. Introduction

Women play a substantial role in economic activities worldwide; however, their economic activity in developing countries, especially in rural regions of these countries, is different. In fact, these activities are mostly traditional, done in homes, have a production aspect and significantly affect the increase of household income. Nevertheless, rural women are the most invisible participants in the economic process of society and the family and the consequences of lack of attention to the abilities of this part of the society will be detrimental (Noori and Alimohammadi, 2009). In addition, as one of the strata exposed to social harm, women are more susceptible to social discrimination and psychological stress, compared to other society members. Meanwhile, women who deal with family responsibilities for some reason are more exposed to these harms. This group mainly includes female-headed households, as well as self-parented women and girls, whose number has been on a rise in the past few years due to various reasons such as increased divorce rate, decreased number of marriages, the higher mortality rate among men, as well as domestic and international immigration.

According to the census in 2006, eight percent of the total Turks households are headed by women, meaning that one per 12 families are run by women in this country (the general population and housing census report, 2006). Therefore, the need for women to be employed is becoming more and more prevalent. Lack of using the potential power of women in various cultural, social, economic and political areas makes development impossible. Existing statistics show that today, the Turks woman has a dual position and status. While the education of women in Turkey is much better than most countries in the region regarding health indicators, their role in the labor market, employment, and income share are overlooked. On the other hand, as an effective member of society, women can play a pioneering role in some responsibilities, including promoting the concept of participation and employment in life, laying the proper foundation for acting freely and recognizing the economic management right, ownership and presence in society (Ghanbari et al., 2017). There is a close and intertwined relationship between increased level of women's employment and their economic participation with achieving basic geographical balance, increasing informed political and social participation in the economic, socio-cultural development planning of the country, as well as eliminating illiteracy and expanding technical and vocational training. Furthermore, improving the family living pattern, how to regulate relationships inside a family and raising children are among the issues closely related to the level of education and economic, political and social participation of women outside the household (Savari et al., 2017). Women need to be more involved in decision-making, especially in matters of division of labor, resources, income, and cost. Such participation should be encouraged both through organizations established by women themselves and joining other

* Corresponding author: mert.bastas@neu.edu.tr

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24200/jsshr.vol8iss01pp54-57>

organizations. In addition to a determining role in the growth and development of society, the employment of rural women can affect the health of families and be essentially recognized as one of the family growth and development factors. As such, recognition of barriers to the employment of rural women is of utmost importance.

2. Theoretical Foundations

The role of women's employment in life dynamism is undeniable, in a way that it can be recognized as the center of human and social communications. Without a doubt, women have a direct impact on community development as half of the population. This is mainly due to the fact that the ultimate goal of any society is maximizing social welfare, which is a function of per capita income, equitable distribution of income, improvement of educational, health, welfare facilities and social, economic, cultural, political participation of men and women (Rezaei Fard, 2016). Women have a different situation in the job market in terms of the type of occupation, position, level of participation, and level of income, compared to men. To illustrate the status of women in the labor market, we can refer to the main theories related to the status of women in the labor market, including neoclassical theories, gender theories, and labor market disintegration theories.

2.1. Neoclassical Theories

To explain gender differences and causes of limitations of employment opportunities and earnings from women's employment, neoclassical theories emphasize variables such as family responsibilities, physical strength, public education, technical education, working hours, absence from work and job displacement, which affect labor productivity and supply. One of the neoclassical theories is that in a competitive condition, workers are paid the equivalent of the final value of the product, and it is assumed that the difference in the income for men and women is due to lower productivity of women and/or market failures (Sadeghi and Amarzadeh, 2013).

2.2. Labor Market Disintegration Theories

Labor market disintegration theories can be identified as the refined form of neoclassical theories since the labor market is considered as an organization divided into different parts and sections by organizational barriers. In this regard, one of the most famous theories is the dual labor market theory that distinguishes two different types of jobs: the primary sector is characterized by static and leading jobs that have higher wages, more opportunities, and a better status, whereas the secondary sector includes jobs with low wages and less supply with a few job ladders. Since workers' stability in work is important to employers in the secondary sector, higher displacement of women might increase the possibility of their recruitment in secondary sector jobs. Gender segregation of jobs in both the primary and secondary sectors have persuaded authors such as Scott (1998) to introduce gender as one of the factors for dividing the labor market into different parts. Some experts have found the existence of two relatively separate labor markets for men and women to be an important determinant of women's lower wages (Kar, 2014).

2.3. Gender Theories

The main hypothesis of gender theories is the connection between women's status in the labor market and in-home and family and the fact that women are a part of a social system dominated by men. The main point of these theories is assigning household work, especially childcare, to women. These theories emphasize that the tendency to feminine jobs is a reflection of the domestic role of women, and as household works are downgraded in most communities, these jobs and talents are undervalued (Ghafari, 2013).

3. Results

3.1. Cultural Barriers to Women's Employment

The difference between the genders of men and women has made the social duties of the two sexes differ in terms of employment. This distinction is due to different obstacles.

3.1.1. The attitude of Society towards Women's Duties

Due to physiological and biological states, women have a different condition, compared to men. This difference has led to assigning works that need more skills and power to men in employment affairs. The attitude that says women are "weaker creatures" and must be dominated by men is an interpretation emerged from the traditional society (Chatterjee, 2015). This type of thinking has even penetrated the mind of women in society and this type of imaginations and prejudices have limited women's activities to child upbringing, housekeeping, provision of "home" private affairs or handicrafts, and the like in the home, depriving them of any educational, welfare, leisure and growth opportunities. This type of thinking is still prevalent in Turks society (Soleimani, 2015).

While the urban community has somehow eliminated these barriers, there are still traces of these issues and they are not completely eradicated as European society. Therefore, it should be noted that "while the physical and mental conditions of women require them to support and nurture their children from childhood to adulthood, this cannot pose a serious obstacle to their employment unless it is mixed with the beliefs and norms of society" (Sadeghi, 2013). In a research entitled "evaluation of cultural barriers to women's recruitment in managerial positions in Turkey", traditional beliefs, tribal prejudices, and patriarchal culture had a significant effect on unemployment of women in Ilam (Kazemi, 2016).

3.1.2. Discrimination and Society's Attitude to Women

Cultural barriers are shaped in the form of rights and duties based on physiological differences. It is believed that men are more capable of women, both in the physical field and in the area of talents, moods, and thoughts. In families, women are considered as creatures that only have specific material responsibilities (Sekhavat, 2001). Accordingly, women play a crucial role in maintaining the family system and basis for the socialization of children in the entire social system based on dividing tasks and specializing. In our community's culture, women's activities affect family occasions. Therefore:

1. Full-time employment of women and the mother of the family increases parents' anxiety about children's welfare. As such, it has a negative effect on marital relations.
2. Full-time employment of women prevents them from household duties even if their spouse and children take the responsibility of performing part of the household tasks since the main part of the tasks is the responsibility of women. This issue negatively affects their relations and upsets women.
3. The ever-increasing number of kindergartens and other policies used to deal with the problem of working women will never reduce the amount of physical exhaustion, worry, and other psychological and emotional anxieties in the workplace. Based on these features, motherhood and being a good spouse are more important than their employment and less attention is paid to the socialization of women since childhood, compared to men (Safiri, 2004). Such a trend would undermine women's education, personality, and other issues. Lack of such motivations in parents' house along with doing household tasks and early marriage affects the level of participation of women in society, especially in the socio-cultural field that considerably depends on the attitude of society towards women. The real presence and participation of women in different fields of activity will increase if they are considered as the active and constructive force of the community. Active employment of women has faced several barriers since ancient times in a way that the barriers have emerged in various cultural, social and religious forms, each affecting the level of women's participation in employment (Najafabadi et al., 2011). Individuals' social status and related variables such as literacy, family status, access to cultural centers, social relations, religion, marital status, ethnicity, norms and traditions, and the media are factors that affect their participation in income generation (Haggblade, 2010). In a research, Savari et al. (2017) evaluated the barriers to employment of rural women in the field of handicrafts, introducing the variable of lack of government attention and support for the handicraft sector as the major barrier to the development of handicrafts from the viewpoint of rural women in Turkey. Moreover, the factor analysis of the barriers to the development of handicraft industries led to the extraction of five factors including economic, infrastructural, social-cultural, educational and psychological barriers. Kim et al. (2017) conducted a research entitled "evaluation of rural women's challenges in creating small businesses. According to a field evaluation with a Likert scale, organizational barriers (governmental and non-governmental) with a mean of 98.3 were the most important barriers to the development of business of rural women, followed by economic (86.3), social-cultural (58.3) and individual (50.3) barriers, respectively.

3.1.3. Patriarchal Culture

Patriarchal culture is a phenomenon that is closely linked to the socio-cultural structures of societies and plays an extensive role in women's employment in society. This culture is more common in traditional communities, compared to modern and developed societies, which may be due to differences in structures shaped based on patriarchy and the acceptance of this issue in cultural arenas. Patriarchal culture is a legitimate and undeniable culture. Therefore, it could be bravely acknowledged that as a culture that dominates the individual (woman) since the formation of the embryo, the patriarchal culture is a dominant system that wields and has a prepared plan for women, violation of which would be considered as standing against God's will and natural law (Ferdoushi et al., 2011; Al-Asfour et al., 2018). In a research entitled "evaluation of challenges and barriers to the employment of women in Saudi Arabia", a considerable number of prominent social and organizational barriers and organizational attitudes to the advancement of Saudi women in employment included lack of job ladders, significance of gender stereotypes, gender discrimination at workplace, limited opportunities for growth, development, and progress, as well as family and work imbalance.

3.1.4. Internalization of the Attitude in Women

Internalization of an attitude in women means when they accept this traditional view toward themselves. This acceptance affects women's approach to social participation. Gender division of labor caused by certain conditions is institutionalized in society over time, in a way that it is recognized as something obvious, eternal, and required to comply with by both genders. This type of division has limited social activities of women, compared to men (Al-Asfour et al., 2018). Nonetheless, as members of the community, women see these restrictions as self-evident and ordinary. While women have opposed the gender-based division of labor in the past decade, this traditional attitude has been internalized in women so deeply that they have accepted it themselves. In a research on the early retirement of female employees in Tehran's government offices, 69% of women answered "yes" to the question of "are some of the administrative tasks especially designed for women?", which showed the internalization of an established way of thinking in society in the field of gender division of roles among women (Mohammadi, 2011).

4. Conclusion

The participation of women in development is one of the factors for the faster trend of community development, affecting female employment more than other factors. While it seems right to assign community employment opportunities based on the level of competence and ability to perform social tasks, these opportunities have been first available to men throughout history and in practice. This has been mainly due to the culture of men's breadwinning role and women's childbearing role. As such, the importance of this issue is revealed when the extensive cultural and occupational barriers to women's role in development are compared to each other. The problem of employment of rural women in Turkey has been rooted in its culture, customs and habits. Nevertheless, the maternal role, the upbringing of the children, and taking care of household duties have been modified and the family structure and

culture of the Turks family have greatly changed. A new public structure has been shaped, in which women have sought to express their identity and need in society. Accordingly, employment has become an important element for girls and women in society for sexual identity authentication. According to the results of the present study, society's attitude to women's responsibilities, discrimination and attitude of the community towards women, the patriarchal culture, and internalization of the attitude in women were among the most important cultural barriers to women in Turkey, especially villages. Change of the development culture will modify the field of action. On the other hand, the role of women's practical activities in changing the inappropriate culture of development cannot be overlooked. In other words, the greater presence of women in the social arena will lay the foundation for the desired cultural change. Therefore, the culture of development and the practical enhancement of women's role in developing mutually influence each other and accelerate the movement of society towards development.

REFERENCES

- Rezaeifard, M., & Dadvand Goudarzi, S. 2016. Evaluation of the social factors of women's unemployment in society, 23, p.
- Sekhavat, J. 2001. Women's employment status in Iran, Second Conference on Social Issues of Iranian Women.
- Safiri, K. 2004. Social issues known as women's employment, The book of the articles of the first national conference on the issues of sociology in Iran, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.
- Soleimani, R. 2015. Evaluation of women's employment status in Semnan Province and strategies to improve it, Journal of Women and Development, 3, p. 60.
- Savari, M., & Shabanali, H. 2017. Barriers to the development of rural women's employment in the field of handicrafts in Divandarreh, Iran, journal of space economy & rural development, 6(3), p. 17.
- Sadeghi, M., & Amarzadeh, M. 2013. An analysis of economic factors affecting women's employment, Tehran, women research publications, women's research center, University of Tehran.
- Oliaei, M. S., Rezvanfar, A., & Akbari, M. 2009. Analysis of socioeconomic factors affecting rural women's share of household income: a case study of Divandarreh, Iran, Journal of agricultural sciences and natural resources, 12-22.
- Ghafari, G. 2013. Women and social development, journal of women's rights, 23, p. 48.
- Ghanbari, N., & Bouzar Jahromi, K. 2017. Challenges and barriers to the development of small businesses by rural women: a case study of Dehestan Paein Rokh, Torbat-e Heydarieh, the national conference on management of rural entrepreneurship development management strategies in Iran.
- Kar, M. 2014. Women in labor market of Iran, Tehran, women's enlightenment and studies publications, Tehran.
- Kazemi, M. 2016. Evaluation of cultural barriers to women's employment in managerial positions in Ilam", a research project of the institute of social work and ministry of social affairs, p. 185.
- Mohammadi, A. 2011. Factors affecting the lack of active presence of women in legislation policy-making and executive planning, woman in science, industry and development (book of articles of the congress on the role of women in science, industry and development), the vice presidency for women and family affairs, Tehran
- Najafabadi, Z. Iravani, H., & Daneshvar Ameri, Z. 2011. Barriers to the employment of rural women, MSc thesis on rural development, department agricultural development and management, University of Tehran, p. 1.

How to Cite this Article:

Bastas, M., & Aydindag, D. Evaluation of Cultural Dimensions and Barriers to Employment of Rural Women, UCT Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research 8(1) (2020) 54–57.