

Women Education in Turkey: A Meta Analysis Study

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Abstract

Human being is naturally represented by both genders having the same characteristics. These two genders differ in terms of some features relative to life. They are separated as women-men in terms of the tasks undertaken by them besides some of features inherent. In addition, the tasks undertaken by women and men can be differentiating traditionally from society to society. Men and women rolls in the historical process have remained virtually as a part of culture in every society. Institutions such as religion, traditions, moral, family structure became a predictor for women and men roles. Turkey is an interesting example, from the aspect of the position of women, because it is a country which is influenced by all the contradictions of globalization and traditions. First of all, the great majority of the population in Turkey is Moslem. Today, women are observed in the forefront of various echelons of the administration of the state. However, there are still inequalities between women and men, and also between women from different sectors of society, in accessing important development sources, such as education, health and employment. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to investigate the past and current situation of women's education in Turkey in terms of different fields. For this purpose, education of some countries was also comparatively examined in terms of women's education, by considering the statistical numbers. The meta analysis method was used throughout the study. It is a statistical technique for combining the findings from independent studies. The researcher investigated many studies with regard to the statistical numbers regarding the education of women in Turkey, as well as other selected countries, in terms of women and health, women and family, women and education, women and professional life, women and politics...etc. The findings clarified that despite the objective situations, women in Turkey have played a vital role in professional life considering the numbers in several independent studies. Although the numbers regarding the professional life and education of women in Turkey seemed to be higher than other Islamic countries, it is still not enough to reach the modern western world. The findings showed that the women's education should be more considered by acknowledging "positive discrimination" in women.

1. Introduction

Human being naturally is represented by both genders having the same characteristics. These two genders differ in terms of some features relative to life. They are separated as women-men in terms of the tasks undertaken by them besides some of features inherent. In addition, the tasks undertaken by women and men can be differentiating traditionally from society to society. Men and women rolls in the historical process have remained virtually as a part of culture in every society. Institutions such as religion, traditions, moral, family structure became a predictor for women and men rolls. Nowadays, Islam's being not understood or interpreted in our society and the traditional understanding of Islam in terms of acknowledging that the woman is the servant of her husband still continues in some part of the society. In some parts of our country, the women both work in the field, take care of the animas and do the housework.

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The task of the men is to take on the heavy farming work. However, the traditional roles of women and men does not exist in metropolitan cities which are formed as a result of immigration, religion, traditions, morality and family structure. The native culture of the individuals who immigrate from their homeland and the modern urban culture conflicts in some ways. In this context, this is one of the basic reasons of domestic violence, violence against women and social problems. Despite the fact that the traditional family does exist in a patriarchal family structure in Turkish society, it is shown that there is a matriarchal structure in practice. The Turkish proverb of “the female bird makes the nest” explains this situation well. In traditional Turkish families, the woman is seen as both the mother, the wife, the teacher of her own children and the manager of the house (<http://www.turkeytravelplanner.com/details/WomenTravelers/WomenInTkSociety.html>). In this context, the mother both has so many responsibilities and also has a voice in Daily life. This type of woman is known as “Ottoman woman”. Today, there are such women only in rural areas.

The societies develops when the women in that societies develop. A society is literate, far-sighted and strong if the women in that society has the same characteristics (<http://blog.milliyet.com.tr/kadinlarin-egitimi-toplum-gelecegi/Blog/?BlogNo=29642>). The most common and important role of the women in societies like ours from past to present is taking care of the children. Nowadays, although this facts changes due to the increase in the population of working women, the women take care of the children, still the women take of the children of these working women. This communication between women and children that is resistant to technology constitutes the human aspects of the society. In addition, the traditional roles of the children in the society is determined in their early ages. The children are educated in a way that the roles of men and women determine. Especially, girls are grown as future housewives or mothers. Even if a women has a work life, her priorities are supposed to be houseworks (<http://e-kutuphane.egitimsen.org.tr/pdf/468.pdf>). The woman is preferably a housewoman, a wife and a mother. In this context, the work done by the children at home are suitable for their future roles.

No matter what the women and men roles are, the humankind has to improve himself in order to adapt to the age and to do the tasks undertaken by him. This eventuates through education. In this sense, education is essential both women and men. From this perspective, in fact it is unnecessary to distinguish as female or male education. However, societies on the cultural sides overlook to women and men from different perspectives as well as tasks undertaken by them. Therefore, it is said inevitably the separation of women education and men education. In democratic countries, education of women and men is seen as equal as a constitutional right. But even in these countries, in terms of cultural meaning differences in education can happen. The purpose of this study, not to accept the separation of women and men education, is to examine women's education as a part of this division of society. For this purpose, especially in Turkey, education of some countries will be comparatively examined. In addition, women's education in the Turkish education system, the historical development of women's education, comparative study of this development, the problems and possible solutions will be exposed.

2. Method

In this study, qualitative research was used. Qualitative research is a type of scientific research. In general terms, scientific research consists of an investigation which seeks answers to a question, systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer the question, collects evidence, produces findings that were not determined in advance, produces findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study (<http://www.fhi360.org>). The data were retrieved via meta analysis which is a qualitative research model. Glass (1976) defines meta analysis as the statistical analysis of a large collection of analysis results for the purpose of integrating the findings. In this study, with qualitative research method, document review and literature review techniques were used. By this way, the data were collected and analyzed.

3. Findings

Turkey, known officially as the Republic of Turkey, is a Eurasian country located in Western Asia and in East Thrace in Southeastern Europe (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey>). Turkey is the world's 37th-largest country in terms of area. The country is encircled by seas on three sides: the Aegean Sea to the west, the Black Sea to the north and the Mediterranean to the south. Turkey also contains the Sea of Marmara in the northwest. The last official census was in 2000 and recorded a total country population of 67,803,927 inhabitants.

According to the Address-Based Population Recording System of Turkey, the country's population was 74.7 million people in 2011 (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey#Demographics>), nearly three-quarters of whom lived in towns and cities. According to the 2011 estimate, the population is increasing by 1.35% each year. Turkey has an average population density of 97 people per km². People within the 15–64 age group constitute 67,4% of the total population; the 0–14 age group corresponds to 25.3%; while senior citizens aged 65 years or older make up 7.3%. In 1927, when the first official census was recorded in the Republic of Turkey, the population was 13.6 million. Turkey is a democratic, secular, unitary, constitutional republic with an ancient cultural heritage (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey>). Turkey has become increasingly integrated with the West through membership in organisations such as the Council of Europe, NATO, OECD, OSCE and the G-20 major economies. Turkey began full membership negotiations with the European Union in 2005, having been an associate member of the European Economic Community since 1963 and having joined the EU Customs Union in 1995. Turkey has also fostered close cultural, political, economic and industrial relations with the Middle East, the Turkic states of Central Asia and the African countries through membership in organisations such as the Turkic Council, Joint Administration of Turkic Arts and Culture, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the Economic Cooperation Organisation.

The great majority of the population in Turkey is Moslem (<http://www.enjoyturkey.com/info/culture/Woman.htm>). Turkey is a strategic country which has territory in both Europe and Asia and has a connection with Middle East and Africa via Mediterranean Sea. Our country, which has predominantly Muslim citizens, is not an Arabic country as known by western countries (mainly Christian societies). The Turks is a unique society with a rich culture and has a history of 9000 years. In Turkey, the society is not only traditional in terms of maintaining a secular, democratic, social and legal Republic founded by Atatürk, the culture and religion but also progressive in terms of pursuing modern and technological developments. In other terms, Turkey is the only country which has attempted and accomplished to reconcile the religion of Islam with secularism and democracy despite of the shortcomings. Therefore, it is an important model for other Muslim countries. Besides all these, Turkey has always been ready for a cooperation with the Western countries in order to develop technologically and economically. A famous Turkish sociologist, Ziya Gökalp, summarizes this situation as following: “I am from Turkish nationality, Islamic community and western civilization”.

Turkey is an interesting example, from the aspect of the position of women, because it is a country which is influenced by all the contradictions of globalization and traditions (<http://www.enjoyturkey.com/info/culture/Woman.htm>). Today, women are observed in the forefront of various echelons of the administration of the state. However, there are still inequalities between women and men, and also between women from different sectors of society, in accessing important development sources, such as education, health and employment. For many years the position of women in society has improved gradually. Although there are some decrees in violation of the equality of men and women in the law, significant steps have been taken in recent years to alleviate this discrimination. A national mechanism has been established and some laws have been amended. The number of Women's Studies Centers set up in universities have reached 13, a Woman's Library was founded and a number of projects were put into practice by the governmental and non-governmental organizations. Most importantly, a sensitivity has been created on the subject of discrimination against women, and this issue began to be perceived as a problem which should be discussed.

Turkey has participated in all the international conferences on the subject of women and has signed many international agreements directly or indirectly related to women. Turkey also accepted without reservations the Action Platform which was adopted at the Fourth World Women's Conference held in Beijing in 1995, in which she participated with a large delegation completely composed of women. By the year 2000, the Republic of Turkey represented by the State Minister at the Conference undertook (<http://www.enjoyturkey.com/info/culture/Woman.htm>):

- To increase the ratio of literacy among women to 100 percent,
- To decrease the maternal-child mortality by 50 percent,
- To make the eight year primary education compulsory, and
- To remove the reservations included in the Charter for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

In accordance with these undertakings, the compulsory primary education was extended to eight years and the reservations at CEDAW were removed.

The increase in women's right around the World in recent years is not qualified as an ultimate solution for changing the facts about the inequality between women and men. The vast majority of the poorest people and people who have no formal education in the World consists of the women. Today, the women have 25- 50% less chance to find a job compared to men in our country. 66% of the work in the World is done by the women, however, the women have only 10% of total revenue and 1% of assets in the World. In other words, despite of the fact that 34% of the work in the World is done by men, they have 90% of total revenue and 99% of total assets in the World. In urban cities of Turkey, 18% of married women are beaten by their husband compared to 76% of women in rural areas. 57.7.5 of women encounters violence on the first day of their marriage. Besides all these, the crimes committed against women constitute 90% of domestic crimes.

The principle of the equality of women-men has been adopted in the Constitution and in the laws of Turkey. The equal treatment of women-men within the legal framework was provided by the adoption of the Swiss Civil Code. Only recently, it has been realized that some of the decrees are insufficient for today's society. A commission formed by the Ministry of Justice, of the professors of civil law, has been authorized to prepare a draft bill which is sensitive to gender, which takes into consideration the amendments made in the laws related to the family in European countries, and also international agreements signed by the Republic of Turkey. The Commission completed its studies and announced the new Turkish Civil Draft Bill on 17 February 1998.

Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in the 1920s, women have had equal status with men in Turkish society, at least in law. But Turkish society was ruled by *shari'a* (Islamic religious law) and a body of medieval social custom for 500 years during the Ottoman Empire, and significant cultural change does not come overnight. The status of women in Turkey is different from what it is in your home country. Not "better," not "worse," but different. In some ways, women may seem subservient to men; but Turkey had a female supreme court justicelong before the USA did, and Turkey has had a female head of government, something the USA, for all its success in women's liberation, has not yet had. Men's and women's roles were clearly defined in traditional Turkish society and each gender was more or less sovereign within its appropriate realm. The husband-father was head of the household, but the wife-mother was in charge of the house and family. Men went out of the house to deal with the world of business, government and military; women stayed close to home and tended the crops, the animals and the household (<http://www.turkeytravelplanner.com/details/WomenTravelers/WomenInTkSociety.html>).

Thanks to Atatürk, the founder of the Republic, who believed in the necessity of complete equality between women and men, all the political rights considered to be the foundation of citizenship rights were recognized for women in Turkey in a very short period of time. Women in Turkey obtained the right to vote and be elected in municipal elections in 1930 and in parliamentary elections in 1934. Prior to that date, the number of countries where women had the right to vote and be elected as members of parliament was 28 and the number of countries where women actually were elected as members of parliament was 17. When it is taken into consideration that women obtained the right to vote in 1944 in France, in 1945 in Italy and in 1948 in Belgium, it appears that Turkey was way ahead compared with many countries (<http://www.enjoyturkey.com/info/culture/Woman.htm>).

A total of 18 women became members of parliament in 1935, which was the year when women members were represented at the highest ratio in the parliament with 4.6 percent. However, as of 1946, when the multi-party system was adopted, a decrease in the number of women deputies was observed. Although the number of women taking an active role in politics has increased in recent years, the number of women are still considerably less than men. The last general election, which took place on 18 April 1999, brought 550 deputies elected into the Turkish parliament, 22 of which were women (4 percent). The women's movement, which gradually makes its voice heard in Turkey, became influential in having women enter into every field in the life of the community and especially in politics. Today, the political parties consider women beyond being just voters and give them a place at the top of their candidate lists.

"Education is a precept for all Muslims, women and men"
(Inscription over the entrance to Ulug Bey Madrasah in Bukhara, built in 1420)

The creation of a secular state, the first-ever in a Muslim country made it possible to pass legislation that recognized women as equal and free citizens vis-a-vis the state, and revolutionized family law. For instance, in 1926, the introduction of the Turkish Civil Code banned polygamy and granted women equal rights in matters of divorce and child custody. Turkish women were also granted suffrage rights first in local elections in 1930, then in national elections in 1934 and they have been exercising these rights for the last sixty-seven years. The underlying aim of these reforms was to position women securely in the public sphere, to make them active and competitive in education, employment, and all aspects of social life. In consequence, many women in Turkey were able to get educated, have careers and jobs, become economically independent and participate in politics. The social and political reforms of the Republic pertained most effectively to legal and formal aspects of social life and were able to change the roles, life styles and status of women in urban areas and relatively higher social classes. Although they also influenced some aspects of cultural and informal relations in society they have not changed women's lives equally in all segments of the population. Today, while the enrolment rate of boys and girls in elementary education is equal, almost one third of adult Turkish women are still illiterate. Illiteracy among women is three times as much as that among men and is mostly found in rural areas of the eastern and southeastern provinces. At the same time, more than one third of medical doctors, more than one quarter of practicing lawyers and judges and one third of university professors in the country are women.

The achievements of the Republic in seventy-five years have paved the way for women's equal citizenship rights and their uncontested presence in the public sphere in modern Turkey. However, laws and public sphere transformations do not define all life conditions (<http://www.turkishculture.org/lifestyles/turkish-culture-portal/the-women-201.htm>). Gender inequality in education is extreme. Girls are less likely to access school, to remain in school or to achieve in education. Education helps men and women claim their rights and realise their potential in the economic, political and social arenas. It is also the single most powerful way to lift people out of poverty. Education plays a particularly important role as a foundation for girls' development towards adult life. It should be an intrinsic part of any strategy to address the gender-based discrimination against women and girls that remains prevalent in many societies.

Everybody has the right to education, which has been recognised since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. The right to free and compulsory primary education, without discrimination and of good quality, has been reaffirmed in all major international human rights conventions. Many of these same instruments encourage, but do not guarantee, post-primary education. These rights have been further elaborated to address issues like quality and equity, moving forward the issue of what the right to education means, and exploring how it can be achieved. As a minimum: states must ensure that basic education is available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable for all. (4A scheme) The right of girls to education is one of the most critical of all rights – because education plays an important role in enabling girls and women to secure other rights (<http://www.right-to-education.org/node/187>).

The sectoral employment data shows that professional women are represented by a great proportion in the fields of university teaching staff, medicine, dentistry and law. The participation of women in higher education has increased throughout the years. The data shows that the share of women in higher education is close to one third of the total. The formation and acceptance of the concept of the equality of women and men in a country like Turkey where the majority of the population is Moslem, and where patriarchal values are dominant, has been possible to a great extent with the existence of a secular educational system (<http://www.right-to-education.org/node/187>).

The inequality of the genders in the educational field directly affects the opportunities for the employment of women. Although a consensus of opinion has been reached from the aspect of the importance of women's participation in the labor force in Turkey, problems still continue in practice. The participation of women in the labor force is low. According to the 1998 data, this ratio is around 28 percent. The great majority of women within the labor force work in the agricultural sector as non-paid family workers. However, it is possible to talk about a positive correlation between the education and the employment of women. As a matter of fact, the rate of unemployment for urban, educated women (28.6%) with those of their male counterparts (30%) displays a parallelism (Turkstat, 2007).

Furthermore, the sectoral employment data shows that professional women are represented at high ratios as university teachers and in the fields of medicine, dentistry and law. One of the obstacles preventing women from employment in productive fields is maternity and child-care. In order to change certain law and regulations concerning the maternity and child-care leave, there are still various activities carried out. After these changes the duration of leave for both workers and civil servants will be brought to an equal status and maternal leave will also be reinterpreted as parental leave (Turkstat, 2007).

Educating girls and women is an important step in overcoming poverty. Inequality and poverty are not inevitable. "The focus on poverty reduction enables the right to education to be a powerful tool in making a change in the lives of girls and women. Poverty has been universally affirmed as a key obstacle to the enjoyment of human rights, and it has a visible gender profile. The main reason for this is the fact that poverty results from violations of human rights, including the right to education, which disproportionately affect girls and women. Various grounds of discrimination combine, trapping girls in a vicious downward circle of denied rights. Denial of the right to education leads to exclusion from the labour market and marginalisation into the informal sector or unpaid work. This perpetuates and increases women's poverty" (Tomasevski, 2005).

Today, women in Turkey still often have to cope with problems that emanate from the continuation of traditional patriarchal values and male dominated relations in many aspects of life. They also often demand further improvement of existing laws in accordance with the changing standards of "women's human rights" in contemporary Western societies. Existing social norms are now being questioned by the Turkish women's movement which has been playing an important role in bringing women's issues to the political and social agenda since the 1980s. Women's issues, common to all societies and increasingly questioned in many, such as gender discrimination in education and the workplace; domestic violence; inadequate representation in decision making positions, etc., are now being questioned from the woman's point of view in Turkey, too. To this end, new institutions such as women's studies graduate programmes and women's research centres in the universities have been established. These institutions together with women's nongovernmental organizations help create a new type of visibility for women in the Turkish political and social scene. The guiding principle in evaluating women's conditions and discussing women's issues in Turkey today, is the globally accepted women's human rights standards. The development of such a contemporary stand could be made possible only with the presence of legal rights guaranteed by the secular Turkish Republic and the cultural and social heritage of the Kemalist viewpoint (<http://www.turkishculture.org/lifestyles/turkish-culture-portal/the-women-201.htm>).

The total number of judges and prosecutors in Turkey is 7446. The number of women judges and prosecutors is 1287 which is 17% of the total number. A total number of 483 female officers and 4654 female civil servant have been working in Turkish army. In 1982, the female officers have been started to be employed in the army since it had been lasted in 1960. The total number of lawyers who are registered in the Union of of Turkish Bar Association is 32,059. The number of female lawyers is 9201 with a percentage of 29. There are also 1347 people performs in notarial services with a number of 209 and percentage of 15.5 female workers. The percentage of women faculty members who worked in Turkish Universities by 2009- 2010 is as the following: Professors: 14,571; 13.82%, Associate Professors: 7827, 7.42%, Assistant Professor: 19,783 18.76% , Lecturers: 16,438 15.59%, Instructor: 7,808 7.41% , Research Assistant: 35,777 33.94%, Specialist: 70 0.07%, and total: 105,427 100%.

Inequality between women and men in education is one of the most important issues in Turkish Educational System (Ka Der, 2003). The proportion of illiterate women in rural areas is 30.4% compared to 10.1% of illiterate men in that areas. It is 18.7 for women and 4.5% for men in urban areas. Household work is defined as suitable work for women The primary task of the women is highlighted as motherhood. Around the World, the total number of children who did not attend primary school although they were in primary school age was 127 million in the 1990s compared to 110 million today. However, this decrease can not be accepted as a success. In terms of the difference between two gender, this situation displays a situation which is against women. The population of women in the World is 2/3 of the whole population. This means that two of every two people who can not attend to primary education are female. It is observed that more women have been increasingly continuing in higher education. While 32% of women were in higher education in 1950s, this rate increased to 48% in 2000. There has been more female students than male students in higher education since 1985.

According to 2002- 2003 statistics of education, enrolment rates of boys in Primary School Education is 100% and for girls, it is 91.8%. The enrolment rates for girls are increasing year by year, however, the aim should be to reach 100% as boys. According to UNESCO (2009), total literacy rate in Turkey is 88.7% with percentage of 96.2 for male and 81.3 for female. As a result, it is observed that the literacy rate is higher for male than female. Also, according to UNESCO (2009) in terms of participation in education: 16% of children are enrolled in pre-primary school, 92% of girls and 95% of boys are in primary school (8 years), 66% of girls and 77% of boys are in secondary school (4 years), 37% of the population of tertiary age is in tertiary education.

As seen in Table 1, in recent years, educational schooling percentage of children has increased in both primary, secondary and higher education levels. However, the educational schooling percentage of girls still remains lower compared to the percentage of boys in both educational levels.

Table 1: Schooling ratio by educational year and level of education (8-year compulsory education) in Turkey

Year	Schooling Ratio	Pre-Primary Education			Primary Education			Secondary Education			Higher Education		
		Total	Males	Female:	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
2005/06	Net				89,77	92,29	87,16	56,63	61,13	51,95	18,85	20,22	17,41
2006/07	Net				90,13	92,25	87,93	56,51	60,71	52,16	20,14	21,56	18,66
2007/08	Net				97,37	98,53	96,14	58,56	61,17	55,81	21,06	22,37	19,69
2008/09	Net				96,49	96,99	95,97	58,52	60,63	56,30	27,69	29,40	25,92
2009/10	Net	38,55	39,17	37,91	98,17	98,47	97,84	64,95	67,55	62,21	30,42	31,24	29,55
2010/11	Net	43,10	43,70	42,47	98,41	98,59	98,22	66,07	68,17	63,86	33,06	33,44	32,65
2011/12	Net	44,04	44,56	43,50	98,67	98,77	98,56	67,37	68,53	66,14	-	-	-

Source: MEB (Ministry of Turkish Education) Statistics, 2012.

4. Conclusion

According to the findings of the study, the situation of women in Turkey is in the same level with developed countries in many aspects. As an example, the situation of women who work at judicial offices and universities as faculty members is above the World standards. Gender equality is guaranteed legally as in developed countries. However, there have been some problems in ensuring that equality in the process of implementing and supervising the laws. The roles attributed to women as a result of cultural values, traditions and the lifestyle based on these values and traditions is another problem of our society. Islam, in no way, defends gender inequality and also is not a barrier of that issue in this regard.

In recent years, the empowerment of women and gender equality are acknowledged as one of the most valuable tools of education. In other terms, it can be said that there is a direct proportion between women education and development levels of countries. There is not any problem in women education that is caused by law and regulations. It is a well-known fact that there are still illiterate women in rural areas of our country. The enrollment rates of girls beginning with primary school is still not at the desired level. Unemployment rates for women is higher than men in metropolitan cities due to the overpopulation. Even unemployment rates for educated women is higher in these cities. To conclude, in recent years, there have been significant developments in women rights, women's status in society and women education. However, these developments could not reach the level of developed countries. Besides these, it is in a better situation compared to less developed and other Muslim countries.

5. Suggestions

- If Turkey aims to become a developed country, it is a necessity to empower the status of the women in the society.
- It is important in the process of achieving gender equality to implement the law and monitor them in the society.
- It can be suggested that women and men should be provided with equal employment opportunities after they have graduated.

- It is essential to take precautions for illiterate women and ensure gender equality in terms of taking advantages of opportunities.
- To conclude, it is required to increase the quality of education, ensure the participation of women in education and gender equality both in education and area of employment.

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