



Received / Makale Geliş Tarihi 04.06.2024
Published / Yayınlanma Tarihi 30.09.2024
Volume (Issue) Cilt (Sayı) 8 (46)
pp / ss 1131-1142

Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi
10.5281/zenodo.13881484
Mail: editor@pejoss.com

Doç. Dr. Meral Fırat

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9464-0548>

İAÜ Üniversitesi, İİBF, Ekonomi ve Finans Bölümü, İstanbul / TÜRKİYE
ROR Id: <https://ror.org/00qsyw664>

Women's Poverty and Fiscal Policies

Kadın Yoksulluğu ve Maliye Politikaları

ABSTRACT

Poverty in the world, especially women's poverty, has started to increase after COVID-19. It is estimated that this increase will continue due to the climate crisis. The main reasons for women's poverty are the low participation rates of women in the workforce, their inability to benefit from educational opportunities equally, and the lack of gender equality. The aim of the study is to investigate the dimensions of women's poverty in the world and in Turkey and to examine the fiscal policies implemented. The study showed that female poverty and the rate of women working unregistered were high in Asian countries, Middle East-North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa, where gender inequality was highest. In Turkey, it has been observed that the female poverty rate will be 3% by 2023. In the study, it was seen that many countries implemented gender-based budget policies regarding women's poverty, and within this framework, they implemented some policies aimed at reducing women's poverty through fiscal policy tools, especially taxes and public expenditures.

Keywords: Women, Poverty, Fiscal Policies, Turkey

ÖZET

Dünyada yoksulluk özellikle kadın yoksulluğu COVID-19'dan sonra artış eğilimine girmiştir. İklim krizi nedeniyle bu artışın devam edeceği tahmin edilmektedir. Kadın yoksulluğunun temel nedenleri, kadınların işgücüne katılım oranlarının düşük olması, eğitim fırsatlarından eşit şekilde faydalanamamaları ve cinsiyet eşitliğinin olmamasından kaynaklanmaktadır. Çalışmanın amacı kadın yoksulluğunun dünyada ve Türkiye'deki boyutlarını araştırmak ve uygulanan maliye politikalarını incelemektir. Çalışmada cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin en fazla görüldüğü Asya ülkeleri ve Orta Doğu- Kuzey Afrika, Sahra Altı Afrika'da kadın yoksulluğunun ve kayıt dışı çalışan kadınların oranının yüksek olduğu görülmüştür. Türkiye'de ise kadın yoksulluk oranının 2023 yılı itibarıyla %33 olduğu görülmüştür. Çalışmada kadın yoksulluğu ile ilgili olarak pek çok ülkenin cinsiyete dayalı bütçe politikaları uyguladığını ve bu çerçevede maliye politikası araçlarından özellikle vergiler, kamu harcamaları araçları ile kadın yoksulluğunu azaltmaya yönelik bazı politikalar uyguladığı görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadın, Yoksulluk, Maliye Politikaları, Türkiye

1. INTRODUCTION

Although there has been a decrease in poverty rates with the effect of economic growth and technological developments in recent years along with globalization, there has been a significant increase in poverty, especially women's poverty, with the effect of economic crises and instabilities experienced after the COVID-19 crisis, especially in developing countries.

According to the annual report published by the United Nations in 2023, 700 million people in the world today live in extreme poverty, especially in conflict-affected regions and rural areas. While 1/3 of adults still do not have a bank account, 675 million people still do not have access to electricity. The same report also states that extreme poverty will increase among women and girls. While the rate of people living with an income of less than \$1.90 before COVID-19 was 11.2% in 2013, it decreased to 8.6% in 2018. However, this rate is expected to increase to 9% by the end of 2022. By the end of 2022, 383 million women and girls will live in extreme poverty compared to 368 million men and boys. Today, 8 out of every 10 people in Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia and South Asia are poor (UN, 2023:8-9).

If the climate crisis is not controlled by 2030, it could victimize 135 million people. At this point, the United Nations aims to reach low-income, unprotected groups, women and unregistered workers, in order to create employment and livelihoods. In the last two years, the United Nations Development Program has supported production in 97 countries and helped develop social protection systems in 63 countries. Again, the United Nations Development Program aims to spend 100 billion dollars to ensure gender equality through gender-sensitive fiscal policies and tax policies (UN, 2022: 5-6).

The problem of poverty is not a problem specific to women only. Depending on time and place, poverty may also be related to being an immigrant, belonging to certain ethnic groups-minorities or a certain social class. However, women and men in all these groups experience poverty in different ways, and the poverty process affects women and men in different ways. In 1995, the expression "feminization of poverty" was included in the Action Plan of the 4th World Conference on Women. The concept of "feminization of poverty" first emerged in the United States as a result of empirical studies showing that women living alone or in single-parent families (woman+child) were poorer. Reasons such as the change in family structure, the increase in divorces, the increase in the rate of having children outside of marriage, and the care of children by women have been used to explain the "feminization of poverty" (Şener, 2009:2).

The main reason for women's poverty is the low participation rate of women in the workforce, their inability to benefit from educational opportunities and the lack of gender equality. In the 2021 report published by the World Economic Forum, Turkey ranked 133rd out of 156 countries in terms of gender equality (Bardakçı and Oğlak,2022:87). With this classification; It can be said that it has maintained its position as the country with the highest gender inequality after 23 countries such as Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia for the last few years. The fact that the labor force participation rate for women in Turkey is lower than for men is one of the main reasons why women's poverty is very high.

The aim of the study is to investigate women's poverty and the fiscal policies implemented to reduce poverty in the world and in Turkey. The study consists of five parts. In the first part is an introduction, in the second part, the concept of poverty is classified, in the third part, women's poverty and fiscal policies in the world are researched, in the fourth part, women's poverty in Turkey is examined, and in the fifth part, ways to combat women's poverty in Turkey are investigated.

2. CLASIFICATION OF THE CONCEPT OF POVERTY

The history of the concept of poverty dates back to ancient times, and today this concept has become a common area of discussion in terms of both economics, politics and sociology. In the last fifty (50) years, there has been a great increase in income in the world with the impact of technological developments and economic developments, but poverty still continues to be the most important economic problem in terms of today's economies (Yılmaztürk, 2016:771-772).

Various definitions are made about poverty. According to a general and narrow definition, poverty is people's lack of ability to meet their basic needs and minimum living standards. With a more comprehensive definition, poverty can be defined as people's deprivation of acceptable living conditions, the opportunities and possibilities that are the most basic human elements necessary for people to live a free and decent life, respectful of themselves and others, and a long, healthy and creative life (Altay and Aslanpay, 2016:5).

Absolute poverty is known as "income poverty" or "monetary poverty", and in the definition of poverty, individuals and households below the poverty line determined by a certain monetary limit (income or consumption) are considered "poor". In this context, a "poverty line" or "poverty limit" is needed for a person or household to be described as "poor".

Absolute poverty generally refers to the minimum standard of living required for a person to survive. This concept was first used officially by World Bank President Mc Namara in 1973. Mc Namara defined absolute poverty as the standard of living at which individuals can meet the basic human needs necessary to be protected from disease, ignorance, malnutrition and misery. Although this condition is rarely seen in developed countries, it affects hundreds of millions of people in developing countries (Gölçek and Organ, 2023:73-74).

Relative poverty, on the other hand, can be defined as the individual's inability to have the minimum living standards required by the society in which they live, considering that humans are social beings. In this sense, relative poverty not only meets basic human needs but also basic social needs such as housing, education, health, etc. It is determined by adding the amount of additional income required by social and cultural needs to the absolute poverty line (Altay and Aslanpay, 2016:6).

Since the commonly used concepts of absolute and relative poverty cannot fully express poverty, a concept called "Human Poverty" was used for the first time by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in the Human Development Report in 1997. According to this concept, while poverty takes into account criteria such as life expectancy, malnutrition, literacy, maternal and child health, and contracting preventable diseases, measurements of income poverty focus on absolute income. Thus, the concept of "Human Poverty" is based on the necessity of having some economic, social and cultural opportunities to meet basic needs, as well as financial means for human development and humane life (Yılmaztürk, 2016:773).

3. WOMEN'S POVERTY AND IMPLEMENTED FISCAL POLICY

The global average gap between male and female labor force participation rates has declined over the past 30 years, but differences between countries are striking. The global gap fell from 27% in 1990 to 20% in 2018. In the same period, it was observed that the gap decreased or remained stable in 4/5 of the countries, while in the remaining 20% of the countries the gap increased due to the decrease in the female labor force participation rate. For example, female labor force participation increased by 28% in Peru, 27% in Spain, 25% in Cuba Verde, 23% in the Maldives, but 25% in Papua New Guinea, 11% in Sri Lanka, 10% in China, Romania it increased by 8%. In addition, the gender gap in labor force participation increased by 35% in 37 countries in 2018 (IMF, 2020:6).

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan has set a target to reduce the gender employment gap as part of its commitment to promote inclusive employment. In 2023, the employment rate of people aged 20-64 in the EU was 75.3%. However, there is a significant difference between male and female employment rates. As seen in Table 1 below, while the male employment rate in the EU is 80.4 percent, the female employment rate in the EU is 70.2 percent. This caused the gender employment gap to increase to 10.2 points. The gender employment gap in six EU countries is larger than the gap in the entire EU. These countries include Poland, Czechia, Malta, Romania, Italy and Greece. The widest gender employment gap was observed in Italy (19.5 points) and Greece (19.8 points); Here, slightly more than half of the female population and approximately three-quarters of the male population are employed. In general, the employment rate of men is higher than that of women in all EU countries. However, in the Baltic countries (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) the gender employment gap is relatively narrow, at around 3 points or less; In Finland, the difference is almost negligible (0.2 points) (Eurostat,2023)

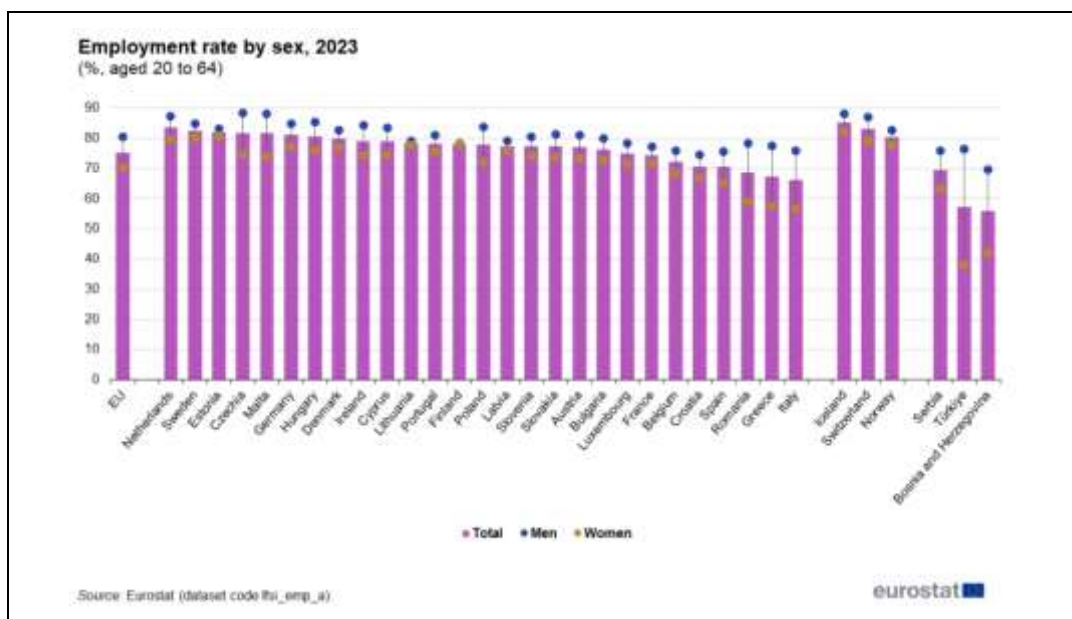


Figure:1 Employment Rate in EU Countries, **Source:** File: Figure:1 Employment rate by sex, 2023 (% , aged 20 to 64).png, Eurostat,2024.

According to the results of the Household Labor Force Survey in Turkey, it has been observed that the labor force participation rate of the population aged 15 and over in 2022 is 53.1%. This rate was 35.1% for women and 71.4% for men (TUIK, 2023). Therefore, the labor force participation rate of women in Turkey seems to be quite low compared to EU countries.

Some groups in society are overrepresented among the poor. The main reason for this is that the majority of the world's poor are population groups that have been historically and systematically exploited and oppressed. Women are often represented among the poor in the world. Because, without exception, in all countries of the world, they are not provided with equal rights and opportunities with men in society. It is estimated that 383 million women and girls worldwide live on less than \$1.90 a day, while 368 million men and boys live on less than \$1.90 a day. The majority of them live in Sub-Saharan Africa 63% and Central and South Asia 21%. While there has been a decline in poverty rates in recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic has halted this progress. So much so that it is estimated that 9% of the world's population will live in extreme poverty in 2022. This rate was 8.6% in 2018 and 11.2% in 2013 (Azcona and Bhatt,2023).

Poverty differs according to gender and age. Differences in the poverty rate by gender are seen mostly among children and young people. At this point, as seen in Figure 2, Central and South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, where 88.4% of the poor live, come to the fore (World Bank, 2021:6).

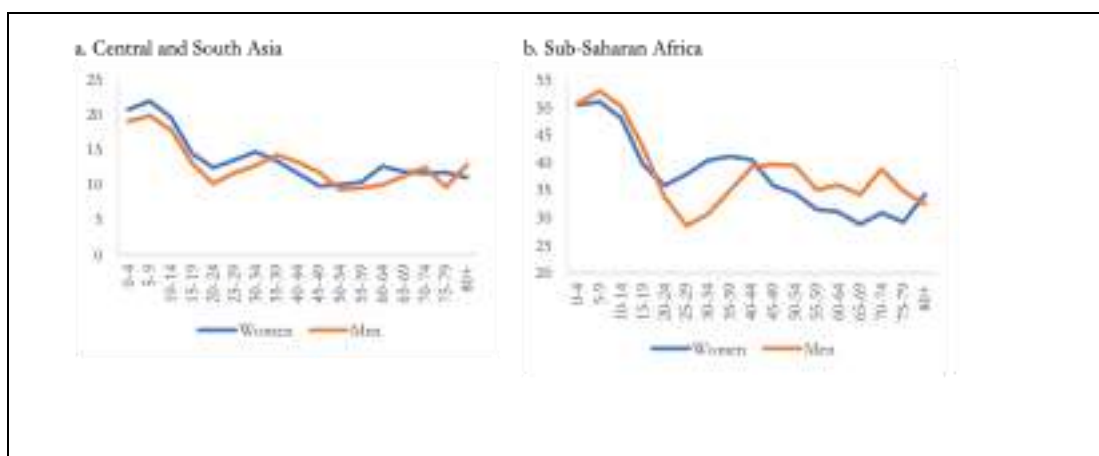


Figure :2 Poverty by Gender is Concentrated in Three Regions, **Source:** Worldbank, 2021, p:6

Poverty decreases with age, especially from childhood to adulthood. However, it decreases at different ages in men and women. It becomes stable when they reach adulthood and after reaching the age of 50. Women are 2 percentage points poorer than men until age 25. On average, there are 120 women for every 100 men in this age group. On the other hand, studies show that divorce, widowhood and separations in the 18-64 age group increase the poverty rate among women. The poverty rate is lower for divorced or separated men than for married men. Divorced or separated women between the ages of 18-49 are twice as likely to be poor as men in the same age group. It has also been observed that single women or men between the ages of 50-64 are poor at a higher rate than their peers of similar ages (Worldbank, 2018:12-15).

However, in many countries, barriers to women's economic participation and gender income gaps remain large. According to a study conducted by the World Bank (2023), 2.4 million working-age women still do not have access to the same legal rights as men. Legal gender equality has been achieved in only 14 countries. This means; For women, it involves disadvantages in terms of freedom, mobility and ability to work, and even a high risk of sexual harassment in the workplace. Figure 3 below shows that less than 50% of labor income has accrued to women over the last three decades. Although there was some catch-up between 1990 and 2020, it varies significantly by region. Inequalities are highest in Asian countries and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). In the MENA region and Sub-Saharan Africa, women still face major legal obstacles Abramovsky and Selwaness, 2023).

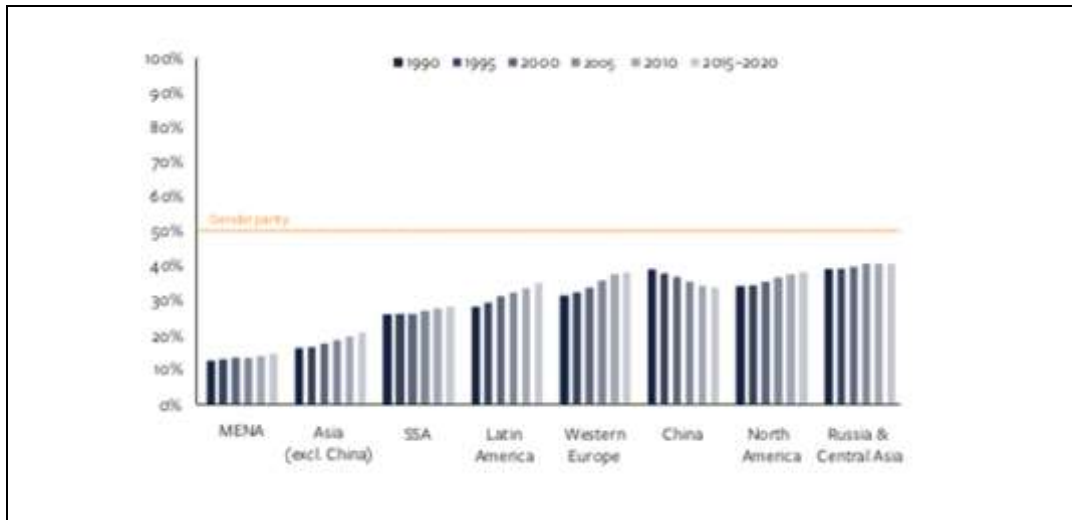


Figure:3 1990-2020 Female Labor Force Income Share, **Source:** Abramovsky and Selwaness, 2023

Beyond being a global goal, gender equality accelerates growth and supports economic development. Gender equality is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals officially endorsed by the United Nations by 193 countries in 2015. Academic empowerment of women has had an impact on both workforce output levels and productivity. According to estimates by IMF staff and others, the narrowing of gender inequality has increased GDP by 4% in Canada, 4% in Japan, 30% in Pakistan, and 32% in Nigeria. Diversity and education foster new thinking, ultimately increasing productivity. Loka and Diauf stated in their study in 2009 that increasing gender inequality in education reduces national income. In places where the school enrollment rate of women was 0.75 lower than that of men, national income was approximately 25% lower. Figure 4 shows the improvement in per capita income as gender inequality decreases. In addition, high women's economic participation is associated with high expenditures on children's education, which has important consequences for growth in the long term. On the other hand, gender equality increases export diversity in developing countries and reduces the risk of concentration in a few goods (IMF, 2018:5-6).

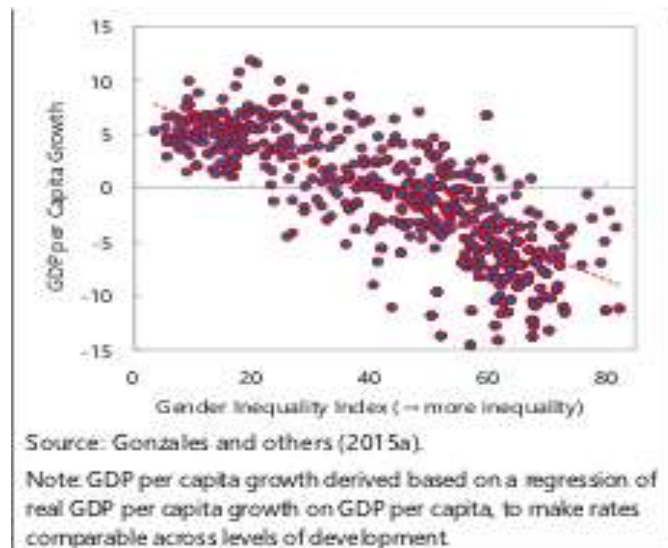


Figure:4 Relationship Between Gender Inequality and Real GDP per Capita, **Source:** IMF,2018,p:6-7

In many regions, women's unregistered employment rates are higher than men. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa), 95 percent of female workers and 89 percent of male workers work unregistered. In South Asia, 91 percent of female workers and 87 percent of male workers work unregistered. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 55 percent of female workers and 53 percent of male workers are employed unregistered. The greater concentration of women in unregistered employment increases their economic vulnerability due to insecurity and lack of social benefits such as paid sick leave associated with this type of work. Policies should be designed to benefit those working in the informal economy. On the other hand, women are concerned about safety and health standards, unpaid care work, entrepreneurship and access to credit, social benefits, social insurance, access to food, dependence on

public transport, access to clean water, housing, etc. They are exposed to inequalities in these areas (ILO,2021:2-6).

Since the mid-1980s, many countries have adopted gender budgeting, which refers to the design and use of tax and spending policies or public financial management tools to address gender inequality and the advancement of women in areas such as education, health, and economic empowerment.

Many international organizations, including the IMF, provide policy advice and technical assistance to countries in this area. As of 2018, more than 80 countries have adopted gender budgeting at varying levels of intensity. Empirical evidence from developed economies shows that income tax has a significant impact on women's labor force participation. The design of a country's tax system has both distributional and allocative effects; It affects income distribution across the population, including women and men, and individuals' decisions about working in the informal or formal sektor (Fabrizio, 2020:10-12).

Of the 43 countries that responded to a survey on the impact of taxation on gender, $\frac{3}{4}$ of them stated that taxes and gender are somewhat important, 8 of these countries stated that they are very important, and 22 countries stated that they implemented tax reforms to ensure gender inequality. In some countries, zero VAT has been implemented on some goods in order to improve gender inequality. In the personal income tax system, tax advantages are more widely provided to women than to men in the taxation of male and female labor force. In Hungary, for example, this tax deduction is for mothers with more than four children. In Israel, extra tax credit points are available to mothers (OECD, 2022:46).

Studies on high-income countries show that when direct taxes and cash transfers come together, gender-based inequalities decrease. Studies conducted on various countries show that gender-based inequality decreases in countries where personal income tax is applied on a more progressive and broad basis. It has been observed that in high-income countries with more progressive personal income taxes, men pay more taxes than women. The reason for this is not because men earn more, but because there is a special pro-women provision in the law. Again, most studies on high-income and middle-high-income countries show that progressive personal income taxes and social security contributions reduce income inequality. Studies show that this tax increases poverty, depending on the rate structure and connection of VAT. For example, a study conducted on OECD countries shows that the progressive structure of both VAT and special consumption tax increases inequality. It is possible for VAT to reduce poverty with VAT exemptions and reduced rates. Discounts or exemptions for some hygiene products used by women will reduce the tax burden of women. Again, the employment participation rate will increase after the discounted VAT on child care services. As a result, many economists think that a broad-based VAT with low exemptions and alternative rates would be effective in increasing revenues and meeting spending policies and reducing inequality and corruption. Studies show that increasing access to child care subsidies in low-income and middle-income countries increases the employment rate (Abramovsky and Selvanes,2023:19-35).

4. WOMEN'S POVERTY IN TURKEY

Table 1 below shows the poverty rates for women and men in Turkey according to age groups. Accordingly, while the poverty rate for men was 28.9% for 2023, it was 33.1% for women. As can be seen from the table, it is seen that the poverty rate among women over the age of 65 has increased over the years. Again, the poverty rate is higher among women aged 18-64 than men.

Table:2 Ratio of Those at Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion by Age Groups, 2015-2023

At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE) by age groups, 2015-2023 (%)									
Age groups	Years								
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total	34,0	33,2	30,7	30,4	32,1	32,1	32,9	32,6	31,0
0-17	42,6	42,0	39,6	39,7	41,8	42,3	43,7	42,7	39,7
18-64	30,7	30,4	27,8	27,6	29,3	30,3	30,7	30,2	28,0
65+	28,7	24,0	21,9	20,8	20,5	17,0	16,8	20,5	26,6
Male									
Total	32,2	31,3	28,8	28,2	30,1	30,0	30,8	30,4	28,9
0-17	42,4	41,6	39,6	38,9	41,1	41,9	42,8	41,9	39,3
18-64	27,8	27,4	24,7	24,4	26,5	27,0	27,5	27,0	24,9
65+	27,9	23,0	19,8	18,6	18,3	15,4	15,5	18,7	25,2
Female									
Total	35,8	35,2	32,6	32,7	34,0	34,2	35,0	34,8	33,1
0-17	42,9	42,4	39,5	40,5	42,6	42,7	44,7	43,5	40,2
18-64	33,6	33,4	30,9	30,8	32,1	33,6	33,9	33,4	31,2
65+	29,3	24,9	23,6	22,6	22,3	18,3	17,9	21,8	27,6

Source: TURKSTAT, Poverty and Living Conditions Statistics, 2023

While women's poverty varies in response to economic, political and social developments, it is explained by individual, cultural and structural characteristics and mainly by gender. The main reason why the consequences of poverty differ according to gender is that the social role of men is to support the household, while the role of women is to ensure the reproduction of the family with the income coming into the house. Although women constitute a significant part of the population, the indispensability of women's domestic role has caused them to remain as a secondary workforce, behind men throughout history. Factors affecting women's participation in the workforce include factors such as low income, being married or not, having children or not, level of education, gaining prestige and self-realization. The characteristics of traditional women's employment indicate working in jobs that do not require much skill, without social security, with low productivity and wage levels. Another factor is that due to migration from villages to cities, women employed in rural areas are excluded from the labor market in the city and are employed in informal sectors (Yilmaztürk, 2016:781-782).

Gender-based privileges are fueled by traditional patriarchal values and have many areas of inequality that make women poorer than men. We can state these inequalities as follows (Buz and Öngen, 2018:323):

According to the results of the Household Labor Force Survey, the labor force participation rate of the population aged 15 and over in 2022 was 53.1%. This rate was 35.1% for women and 71.4% for men.

When the labor force participation rate is examined by education level, it is seen that women participate more in the labor force as their education level increases. While the labor force participation rate of illiterate women is 13.9%, the labor force participation rate of women with less than high school education is 27.1%, the labor force participation rate of high school graduate women is 36.1%, the labor force participation rate of women who are vocational or technical high school graduates is 43.0%, while the labor force participation rate of women with less than high school education is 43.0%. The labor force participation rate of graduate women was 68.8% (TUIK, 2023).

The highest female employment rate was in the Trabzon, Ordu, Giresun, Rize, Artvin, Gümüşhane region with 37.4%, and the lowest female employment rate was in the Mardin, Batman, Şırnak, Siirt region with 18.2%.

5. FIGHTING WOMEN'S POVERTY IN TURKEY

While the policy followed by the World Bank in the fight against poverty was to improve the industries of developing countries and increase infrastructure investments in the 1960s, since the 1990s, the fight against poverty has focused on economic growth, investing in people, economic balance, world bank debts, participation and environment issues has happened (Öztürk and Çetin, 2009:2685).

Immediately after the decisions of January 24, 1980, Turkey adopted and implemented the paradigm that forms the basis of poverty reduction strategies over time. Social Assistance and Solidarity Incentive Fund was established in 1986. Green Card application was started in 1992. The fund was transformed into the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Solidarity with the law no. 5263, which came into force on 01.12.2004. Social aid activities are carried out through Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SYDV) established in the governorships in the provinces and under the district governorships in the districts (Fırat, 2013:200). The General Directorate of Social Assistance, affiliated to the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (Ministry of Family and Social Services), established in 2011, is responsible for producing, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating national policies regarding poverty alleviation and social assistance. In addition, other duties of the general directorate include collecting the revenues of the Social Assistance and Solidarity Incentive Fund, providing social assistance on time and in line with the needs of the target group, and monitoring and supervising the work of SYDVs. The social assistance programs provided are in the form of family assistance, education assistance, health assistance, special purpose assistance, elderly and disabled assistance, project supports and employment assistance. Some of these aids are regular and some are temporary social aids (Buz and Öngen, 2018:330).

There are significant differences between EU member states in terms of levels of expenditure on social protection benefits relative to GDP. As seen in Figure 5 below, in 2021, this rate reached its peak in France with 33.4%, followed by Austria 32.3% and Italy 30.7%. At the other end of the range, expenditure on social protection benefits as a percentage of GDP was 13.2% in Ireland, 16.3% in Romania, 17.1% in Estonia and 17.4% in Hungary; Relatively low rates (below 20%) were also recorded in Malta, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Latvia. On average, from 2011 to 2021, the share of social assistance spending in GDP in the EU increased from 27.0% to 28.7%, but there are large differences between countries: most EU countries saw an increase in this share (Austria and more than 4 points in Poland), a decrease in this share

was recorded in six countries, the highest rate measured in Ireland. While all three EFTA countries showed a positive change in the same period, the two candidate countries for which data for the entire period are available recorded a decrease in this indicator (Eurostat,2024).

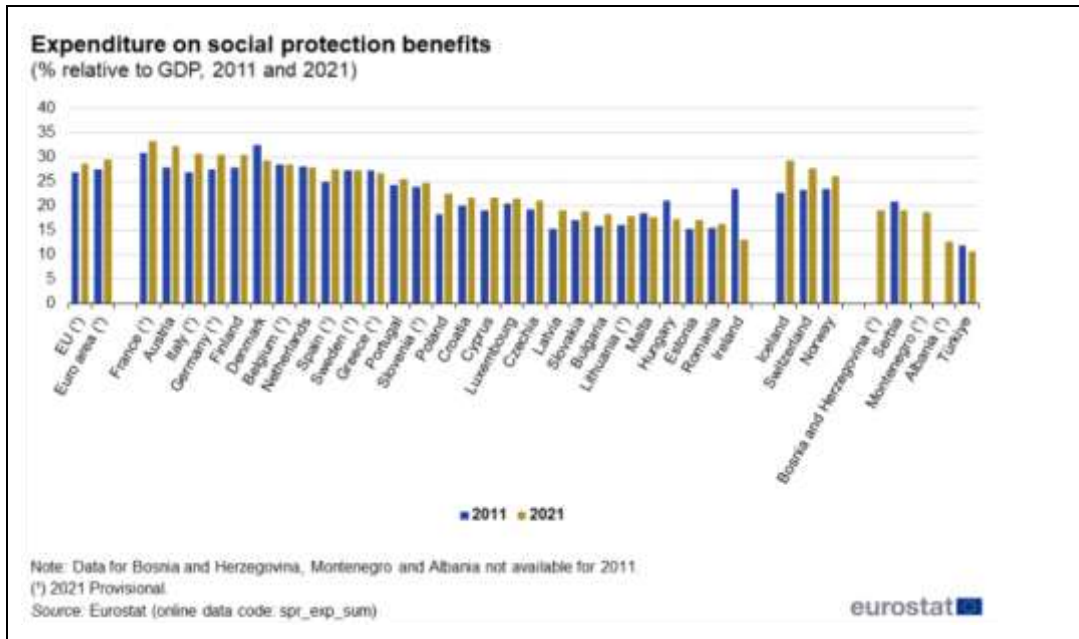


Figure:5 Expenditure on Social Protection Benefits, **Source:** Eurostat, 2004

Figure 6 below shows the increase in social protection expenditures in Turkey over the years. Accordingly; social protection expenditure increased by 60.2% in 2022 compared to the previous year and reached 1 trillion 291 billion 77 million TL. 98.2% of this expenditure was made up of social protection aid with 1 trillion 267 billion 924 million TL. In social protection aid, the largest expenditure was the expenditures for retirees/elderly people with 567 billion 450 million TL. This was followed by illness/health care expenditures with 396 billion 993 million TL.

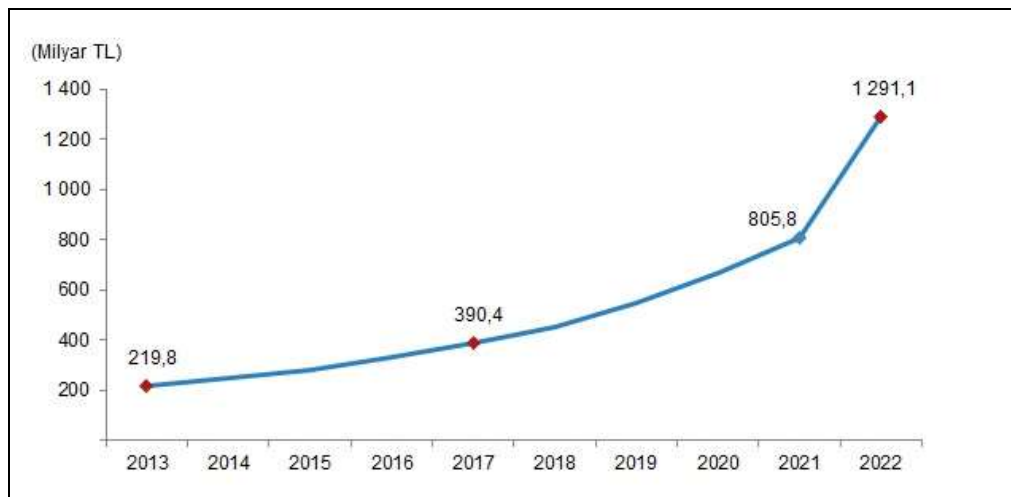


Figure:6 Social Protection Expenditures in Turkey, 2013-2022, **Source:** TURKSTAT, Social Protection Expenditures, 2024

Table 2 below shows the distribution of social protection aid according to its components in the EU and Turkey. Accordingly; While payments to retirees/elderly people receive the highest share, 45% in the EU and 57% in Turkey; The last place is social exclusion payments. While the share of payments made to retirees/elderly people in the EU in 2021 in GDP is approximately 13%, it is 6% in Turkey. The high rate of this ratio can be explained by the fact that pension is included in the share allocated to retirees/elderly people. Social exclusion occurs in areas such as age, gender, religion and ethnicity, and disability; In these areas, groups are systematically disadvantaged due to the discrimination they are exposed to. Economic reasons manifest themselves in the areas of unemployment, lack of education and income. The issue of social exclusion is one of the important areas that the EU struggles with, and 1.1% of GDP is spent on this


area. In Turkey, the share allocated to social exclusion is 0.1% of GDP. It is important to integrate individuals who face social exclusion into society.

Table:3 Breakdown of Social Protection Expenditures by Components

Expenditure on social protection benefits by function
(%, 2021)

	Old age and survivors		Sickness/health care		Disability		Family/children		Unemployment		Housing and social exclusion	
	(% of social protection benefits)	(%, relative to GDP)	(% of social protection benefits)	(%, relative to GDP)	(% of social protection benefits)	(%, relative to GDP)	(% of social protection benefits)	(%, relative to GDP)	(% of social protection benefits)	(%, relative to GDP)	(% of social protection benefits)	(%, relative to GDP)
EU	45.3	13.0	29.7	8.5	6.9	2.0	8.3	2.4	5.9	1.7	3.9	1.1
Euro area	45.2	13.4	30.0	8.9	6.6	2.0	7.8	2.3	6.3	1.9	4.0	1.2
Belgium	45.0	12.9	28.6	8.2	9.2	2.6	7.4	2.1	6.7	1.9	3.2	0.9
Bulgaria	49.4	9.0	29.2	5.3	8.6	1.6	8.5	1.6	2.8	0.5	1.6	0.3
Czechia	44.0	9.3	35.4	7.5	5.7	1.2	8.3	1.8	5.1	1.1	1.5	0.3
Denmark	38.8	11.4	23.5	6.9	16.8	4.9	10.8	3.2	3.9	1.2	6.2	1.8
Germany	41.1	12.6	32.7	10.0	7.0	2.2	11.8	3.6	5.1	1.5	2.3	0.7
Estonia	40.6	6.9	29.6	5.1	10.9	1.9	12.8	2.2	5.5	0.9	0.7	0.1
Ireland	30.3	4.0	41.2	5.4	5.0	0.7	8.3	1.1	10.7	1.4	4.5	0.6
Greece	62.2	16.6	22.2	6.0	3.9	1.1	5.3	1.4	3.9	1.0	2.5	0.7
Spain	48.0	13.2	29.0	8.0	6.2	1.7	5.6	1.5	9.2	2.5	2.1	0.6
France	43.1	14.4	30.8	10.3	6.1	2.0	6.7	2.2	7.2	2.4	6.1	2.0
Croatia	41.9	9.1	35.5	7.7	9.0	2.0	9.1	2.0	2.8	0.6	1.7	0.4
Italy	55.9	17.2	22.9	7.1	5.3	1.6	4.1	1.2	6.5	2.0	5.3	1.6
Cyprus	46.0	10.0	27.6	6.0	3.4	0.7	4.7	1.0	11.7	2.5	6.6	1.4
Latvia	41.2	7.8	33.3	6.3	8.0	1.5	11.0	2.1	5.5	1.1	1.0	0.2
Lithuania	38.6	7.0	30.3	5.5	7.8	1.4	11.2	2.0	10.1	1.8	2.1	0.4
Luxembourg	40.1	8.6	26.9	5.8	11.4	2.5	14.8	3.2	4.0	0.9	2.8	0.6
Hungary	46.7	8.1	32.2	5.6	5.0	0.9	10.6	1.8	2.3	0.4	3.3	0.6
Malta	43.0	7.7	32.7	5.8	3.4	0.6	5.2	0.9	13.4	2.4	2.2	0.4
Netherlands	41.2	11.5	36.0	10.0	8.7	2.4	4.6	1.3	2.7	0.7	6.9	1.9
Austria	47.8	15.4	27.2	8.8	5.4	1.8	8.5	2.7	9.1	3.0	2.0	0.6
Poland	50.8	11.4	25.8	5.8	4.9	1.1	15.0	3.4	1.9	0.4	1.6	0.4
Portugal	53.7	13.7	27.9	7.1	6.8	1.7	5.1	1.3	5.8	1.5	0.9	0.2
Romania	54.9	9.0	26.9	4.4	4.9	0.8	11.9	1.9	0.7	0.1	0.7	0.1
Slovenia	43.1	10.7	34.3	8.5	5.0	1.2	7.5	1.9	6.7	1.7	3.4	0.8
Slovakia	44.9	8.5	32.3	6.1	7.4	1.4	10.3	1.9	4.0	0.8	1.1	0.2
Finland	44.9	13.8	23.2	7.1	9.1	2.8	10.3	3.1	6.5	2.0	6.1	1.9
Sweden	44.7	12.2	29.4	8.0	8.9	2.4	10.1	2.8	3.7	1.0	3.3	0.9
Iceland	29.4	8.6	33.0	9.6	14.9	4.4	9.7	2.9	8.4	2.5	4.6	1.3
Norway	37.7	9.9	29.9	7.8	15.8	4.1	10.9	2.9	3.3	0.9	2.5	0.6
Switzerland	45.3	12.6	31.4	8.7	7.9	2.2	5.7	1.6	6.6	1.8	3.2	0.9
Bosnia and Herzegovina	48.2	9.3	35.5	6.8	9.2	1.8	4.0	0.8	2.0	0.4	1.2	0.2
Montenegro	45.0	8.4	35.7	6.7	7.2	1.3	3.9	0.7	6.2	1.2	1.9	0.4
Albania	53.6	6.9	24.2	3.1	12.4	1.6	6.5	0.8	2.6	0.3	0.7	0.1
Serbia	52.0	9.9	31.2	6.0	5.0	1.0	6.2	1.2	2.6	0.5	3.0	0.6
Türkiye	57.1	6.1	31.2	3.3	3.1	0.3	4.3	0.5	3.8	0.4	0.6	0.1

Source: Eurostat (online data code: spr_exp_sum)



Source: Eurostat,2024

As seen in Figure 7 below, 62.4% of social protection benefits in Turkey will be given in cash in 2022. The largest share in cash aid is made up of aid to retirees/elderly people, with 71.2%. This is followed by widow/orphan benefits with 18.6% and family/child benefits with 4.5%. As can be seen from the table, 87% of social protection benefits are given unconditionally. The largest share among conditional aid was family/child aid, with 47.5%. This was followed by disability/invalidity benefits with (20.4%) and illness/health care benefits with 13.9% (TUIK, 2023). Since there is no income test when giving social protection aid in Turkey and it is given unconditionally, the aid is not given to those in real need, therefore success in the fight against poverty cannot be achieved.

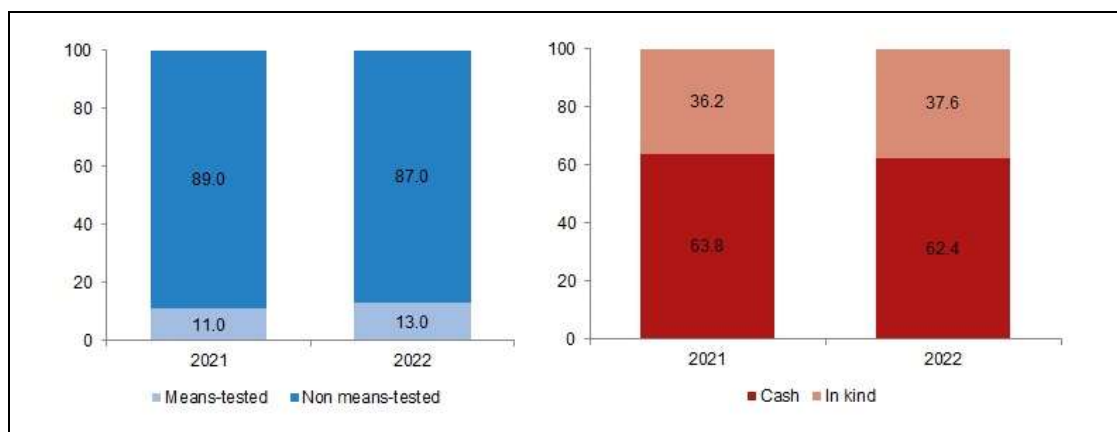


Figure:7 Social Protection Aids by Types (%)2021,2022, **Source:** TURKSTAT, Social Protection Expenses, 2000-202

The state can reduce women's poverty through fiscal policy tools such as taxes, public expenditures, budget and borrowing policy.

Tax Policy Measures: With the application of negative income tax, income support can be provided to women whose income is below a certain level or has no income at all. Direct taxes such as corporate tax, income tax, wealth tax can be regulated according to the gender of the taxpayer. It would be beneficial to comply with the progressive rate in personal income tax and reduce the tax rate to be collected from women. On the other hand, taxes such as VAT, which are among indirect taxes, are mostly paid by the poor. Since women have an important place among the poor, the tax rate can be reduced in these areas, especially on hygiene-related goods that are frequently used by women and on some services in the field of women's health.

Borrowing Measures: In terms of borrowing policy, if the debts are made for general expenses such as education, health and food, a discrimination can be made according to gender.

Public Expenditure Measures: Governments in many countries spend as much on health and education as they do on economic infrastructure. Again, in many countries, governments are directly responsible for providing social security to the poor and the elderly. In this sense, gender-sensitive budgeting in public expenditures is very important. We can classify expenses within this framework: (Yıldız and Uğur, 2016:276)

Gender-Based Expenditures: Based on groups such as women, men, girls and boys. For example; for women; violence, birth control, birth, gynecological diseases, prostate cancer for men, etc. The greater need for services in areas requires these services to be more subsidized.

Expenditures Ensuring Gender Equality within Public Services: With these types of expenditures, it is attempted to ensure equality between men and women by ensuring the participation of women in management. For example; It may be considered that half of the people employed by the public sector are men, half are women, or incentives and subsidies are given to workplaces that employ women.

6. CONCLUSION

After the COVID-19 crisis, there has been an increase in poverty, especially women's poverty, in the world. According to reports published by the United Nations, 700 million people in the world live in extreme poverty today. In the same report, it is estimated that poverty is higher for women and girls than for men and boys.

The study showed that female poverty and the rate of women working unregistered were high in Asian countries, the Middle East-North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa, where gender inequality was highest. The main reasons for women's poverty are the low participation rate of women in the workforce, their inability to benefit from educational opportunities and the lack of gender equality. Reports published regarding gender inequality show that Turkey ranks 133rd among 156 countries. Again, in terms of labor force participation, Türkiye lags behind many EU countries. While the labor force participation rate of women in Turkey is 35%, this rate is over 70% in many EU countries.

The study showed that female poverty and the rate of women working unregistered were high in Asian countries, the Middle East-North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa, where gender inequality was highest. The main reasons for women's poverty are the low participation rate of women in the workforce, their inability to benefit from educational opportunities and the lack of gender equality. Reports published regarding gender inequality show that Turkey ranks 133rd among 156 countries. Again, in terms of labor force participation, Türkiye lags behind many EU countries. While the labor force participation rate of women in Turkey is 35%, this rate is over 70% in many EU countries.

In the study, it was seen that the expenditures on social institutions, which have an important place in the fight against poverty in Turkey, are lower than in other EU countries, and approximately 87% of the aid is given unconditionally without any income test, and therefore the social aid is not effective in the fight against poverty because it is not provided to those in real need.

RESOURCES

- Azcona. G. and Bhatt. A. (2023) *Poverty is not gender neutral*, <https://sdg-action.org/poverty-is-not-gender-neutral/>
- Abramovsky, L. and Selwaness, I. (2023), Fiscal Policy and Gender Income Inequality: The role of taxes and social spending, pp: 1-53, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371947443_Fiscal_policy_and_gender_income_inequality_The_role_of_taxes_and_social_spending
- Altay, A and Aslanpay, E. (2016). Understanding Women's Poverty: An Evaluation of Turkey, *Karatahda Business Writing Magazine*, (4), 1-30,
- Bardakçı, Ş and Oğlak, S. (2022). Gender Inequality Index and Turkey, *Journal of Social Policy*, 3, 71-90.
- Buz, S. and Öngen, Ç. (2018). Poverty Fighting Policy in Turkey in Terms of Gender Equality, *Journal of Social Sciences*, 21, 321-338,
- Eurostat (2024). *Social Protection Statistics, Social Benefit*, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=Social_protection_statistics__social_benefits#Expenditure_on_social_protection_benefits_by_function
- Eurostat (2023). File: Figure:1 Employment rate by sex, 2023 (% , aged 20 to 64).png, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=File:Figure_1_Employment_rate_by_sex,2023_\(%25_,_aged_20_to_64\).png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=File:Figure_1_Employment_rate_by_sex,2023_(%25_,_aged_20_to_64).png)
- Fabrizio, S. et al. (2020). Women in the Lober Force: *The Role of Fiscal Policy*, p:1-42, <https://dspace.ceid.org.tr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1/904/women%20labor%20force%20imf.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Firat, M. (2013). Poverty in Developing Countries and Turkey, *Trakya University Journal of Social Science*, 15 (1),185-206
- Gölçek, A.G. and Organ I. (2023). Evolution of Poverty Paradigms: A Historical and Conceptual Review, *Political Economic Theory*, Special Issue, 69-96,
- IMF. (2020). Women in the Labor Force: The Role of Fiscal Policy, pp: 1-22, [imf.org/en/Publications/Staff-Discussion-Notes/Issues/2020/02/11/Women-in-the-Labor-Force-The-Role-of-Fiscal-Policies-46237](https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Staff-Discussion-Notes/Issues/2020/02/11/Women-in-the-Labor-Force-The-Role-of-Fiscal-Policies-46237)
- IMF. (2018). *Persuing Women's Economic Empowerment, Meeting of G-7 Ministers and Central Bank Governors*, Whistler, Canada, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Policy-Papers/Issues/2018/05/31/pp053118pursuing-womens-economic-empowerment>, p:1-28
- ILO. (2021). How to Assess Fiscal Stimulus Packages From Gender Equality, p:1-25, <https://www.ilo.org/publications/how-assess-fiscal-stimulus-packages-gender-equality-perspective>
- OECD. (2022). Tax Policy and Gender Equality, p:1-52, <https://www.oecdilibrary.org/docserver/b8177aeaen.pdf?expires=1721591077&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=D81B65EB6E0E36955F1B1DD906C90824>
- Öztürk, M and Çetin B.I. (2009). Poverty and Women in the World and in Turkey, *Journal of Yaşar University*, 3(11),2661-2698,
- Şener, Ü. (2009). *Women's Poverty*, 2009, p:1-12, https://www.tepav.org.tr/upload/files/1271312994r5658.Kadin_toplugu.pdf
- World Bank (2021), A Global View of Poverty, Gender and Household Composition, p:1-29, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/776061614181162133/pdf/A-Global-View-of-Poverty-Gender-and-Household-Composition.pdf>
- World Bank (2018). Gender Differences in Poverty and Household Composition Through the Life, Cycle <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/135731520343670750/pdf/WPS8360.pdf>, p:1-45
- TURKSTAT. (2023). *Women in Statistics*, <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Istatistikzler-Kadin-2023-53675>
- TURKSTAT. (2023). Poverty and Living Conditions Statistics, <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=topluluk-ve-Yasam-Kosullari-Istatistikleri-2023-53713>

- TURKSTAT. (2023). Social Protection Expenditures, 2000-2022, <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Sosyal-Koruma-Istatistikleri-2000-2022-53834>
- UN. (2022). Progres on the Sustainable Development Goals, The Gender Snapshot, p:1-31, https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2022-en_0.pdf
- UN. (2023). *Development Program Annual Report*, pp: 1-21, file:///Users/meralfirat/Downloads/annual-report-2023.pdf,
- Yılmaztürk, A. (2016). Causes of Women's Poverty in Turkey and Methods of Fighting It, *Balikesir University Social Sciences Institute Journal*, 19(36),769-796,
- Yıldız, S. and Uğur, A. (2016). Gender-Sensitive Budgeting and Country Experiences, *Manas Journal of Social Research*, , 5(3),271-292