Determinants of female (non-) participation in the urban labour force in Turkey[1]

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Abstract

This study attempts to explore the determinants of non-participation, that is, factors influencing women's decision not to enter the labour force in urban Turkey. It adopts an approach which emphasises women's socio-demographic characteristics and their family backgrounds. The evidence comes from a field survey undertaken in four big cities of Turkey during Fall 1995. Factors underlying female non-participation are discussed on the basis of two logistic regression models, one for the whole data set and another for the subset of married women. The findings of the models indicate the importance of the role of women as "wives and mothers" in the household as a determinant of non-participation.

1. Introduction

Since the 1970s, particularly in the developing countries the participation of women in the labour force has grown dramatically (Berry, 1987; Brydon and Chant, 1989; Humphrey, 1984). Researchers have argued that the global feminization of the labour force is associated with structural adjustment policies that have led to an expansion of the export-oriented sector (Çağatay and Özler 1995; Standing, 1989).

Turkey, in the beginning of the 1980s, like most other developing countries, had a break with her past development strategy of import-substitution industrialisation and adopted export-oriented policies. However, export-led growth policies did not seem to cause a substantial change in the gender-based labour force participation and the occupational composition of females in the labour market. The labour force is still markedly segregated by gender, especially in the urban areas. Analysis of data by occupation show that women are concentrated in a limited range of occupations in the lower ranks of the labour market performing work closely related to their traditional household tasks (Çağatay and Berik, 1991; Özar 1994, World Bank 1993).

In 1995 only 15% of women aged 12 and over participated in the urban labour force whereas this figure was 67% for men (SIS, 1996). However, unemployment figures display a reverse situation for women and men. The October 1995 Household Labour Force Survey reports that the unemployment rate for men aged 12 and over was 8% while the unemployment rate for women for the same age group was 19% in the urban areas. Hence, the continuing low participation and high unemployment rates for women compared to men emerge as crucial aspects of the urban labour market in Turkey from a gender perspective.

Conventionally, studies on female labour force participation focus on the "participants", that is, the employed and the unemployed. In this study, however, we attempt to investigate the factors leading to non-participation. Our argument here is that, by exploring the characteristics of participants in the labour market, conventional studies neglect the factors which make a significant number of women "housewives". Hence, this study aims to investigate the determinants of non-participation, that is, factors influencing women's decision not to enter the labour force.

The outline of this paper is as follows. The first part presents some stylised facts on the female labour force participation in big cities. Factors underlying female non-participation are then discussed on the basis of two logistic regression models.

One for the whole data set and another for the subset of married women. The findings of the estimated models are compared and discussed in the final section.

2. Female participation in the urban labour force: Some stylised facts

This paper uses data from a field survey conducted in four big cities of Turkey, namely İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, and Adana during Fall 1995. The survey was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, a random sample of 3,617 households was selected. 5,646 women, aged between 15 and 49, living in these households were screened to estimate the socio-demographic characteristics and the status of the whole female population in relation to the labour market.

The findings of the first stage of the field survey show that 59% of the women between the ages of 15 and 49 were non-participants, 18% were employed, 10% were unemployed, 12% were pupils or students and 1% were pensioners. Thus, the data indicate a female labour force participation rate of 28% and a high female unemployment rate of 35% in the above-mentioned four big cities of Turkey.

The participation rates by age groups shown in Figure 1 reflect the life-cycle effects on labour force participation of women. The participation rate peaks in the 20-24 age group to 41% and declines during the 25-34 age interval (the marriage and child-bearing period), rises slightly from 21% to 25% in the age group 35-39 and continues to fall thereafter. The curve indicates that the majority of women do not or cannot reenter the labour market after an interruption in employment.

Furthermore, Figure 1 displays extremely high unemployment rates for urban women, above 30% for all age groups.

Table 1 reflects the fact that marital status and the level of education have significant effects on participation. 42% of unmarried women participate in the labour force, whereas this rate drops to 21% for married women. Furthermore, among women with no formal education the labour force participation rate is 17%. It shows a rising trend with an increase in the education level education and reaches 74% for university graduates. The unemployment rate, on the other hand, is 35% in general, showing no significant change according to marital status but varying substantially with the level of education. For the uneducated it reaches an extraordinarily high level of 64% and with rising education it shows a falling trend, reaching 11% for university graduates.

Figure 1
Female Participation and Unemployment in the Urban Labour Force
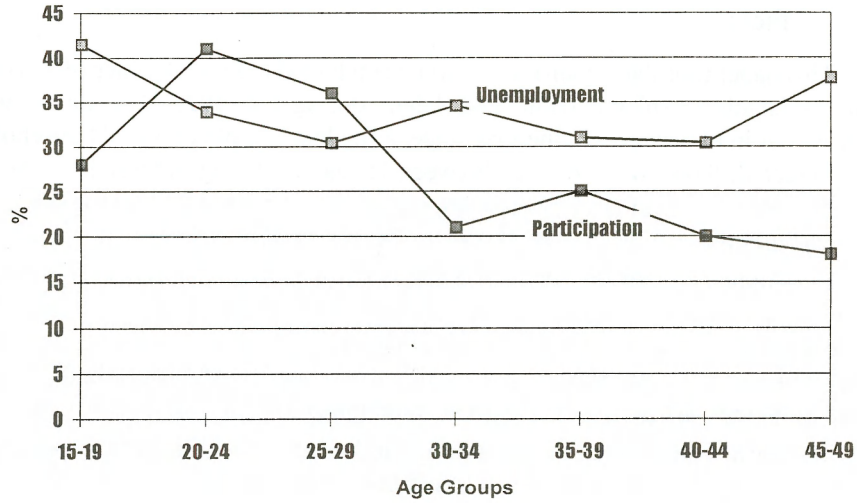
Table 1
Employment of Women by Marital Status and Educational Level

Status	Total (%)	Married (%)	Illiterate/Literate with no Diploma Unmarried (%)	Primary Diploma (%)	Junior High School (%)	High School (%)	School (%)	University (%)
Employed	18	13	28	6	11	13	27	66
Unemployed	10	8	14	11	10	8	13	8
Housewife	59	76	24	82	77	47	35	17
Student, pupil	12	1	33	1	1	31	23	6
Retired	1	2	1	-	1	1	2	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Base	*5646*	*3741*	*1905*	*555*	*2503*	*974*	*1271*	*343*
Labour force participation rate	28	21	42	17	21	21	40	74
Unemployment rate	35	37	32	64	42	37	32	11

Source: SIS, Census of Population

Other evidence in addition to the findings of the survey show that the family is the dominant social unit in Turkish society and in this context the status of women in general can be defined as "married, with children" (Table 2).[2]

Table 2
Marital Status by Age Groups, 1990 (Province Centres)

| Marital Status | Total % | Age Groups | | | | | |
		15-19 %	20-24 %	25-29 %	30-34 %	35-39 %	40-49 %
Unmarried	28	85	39	13	6	3	2
Married/divorced/ widowed no children[1]	7	8	15	9	5	4	4
Married/divorced/ widowed with children	65	7	46	78	89	93	94
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: SIS,Census of Population.
[1] The categories "married, divorced and widowed" are not given separately by age. However, the number of "widowed and divorced" women in province centres make up only 8% of the total female population aged 12 and over.

In the second stage of the field survey, again in the four big cities of Turkey, 1,022 non-working women (women who were unemployed, who were formerly employed and had no intention of looking for a job, and who had never worked in their lives) were interviewed in their homes. For the purposes of the original research project a stratified random sampling method was used and 795 unemployed women and 227 non-participants were selected. In the following sections of this study we use data obtained from the second stage of the field survey.

3. Female non-participation in the urban labour force

First, we differentiate non-participants (housewives) from participants represented by the unemployed women. Due to the unavailability of data on working women we use data on unemployed women as a proxy for the total number

[2]   See for example SPO (1993).

of participants. This proxy, however, creates selectivity bias to the extent that unemployed women do not represent all women participating in the labour force, that is, unemployed and employed. However, one could also argue that unemployed women are those who have already taken the decision to participate in the labour force and that, at least for some of them, not being observed as working at the time of the survey is a matter of coincidence.[3]

Taking into consideration the above stated information about female participation in the urban labour force and women's dominant social role as "wives and mothers", we assume that female non-participation in the labour force might be affected by women's personal characteristics, their status in the family and the economic environment.

Personal characteristics include age, educational level, region of origin and city life experience. The position of women in the family is considered by marital status, number of children, children's age groups and husband's educational level. The economic environment includes the income level of the household, number of working members of the household and the dependency ratio (number of working members of the household divided by the size of the household).

Our sample includes women between the ages of 15 and 49. The mean age of non-participants is 32.40 whereas the mean age of the unemployed women is 27.99. This indicates that on the average non-participant women are older than the unemployed by about four and a half years (See Appendix, Table A1).

The overwhelming majority of the non-participants are married women with and without children (86.7%), whereas this rate drops to 55.8% for unemployed women (See Appendix, Table A3). Women live in nuclear families with a mean size of about 4.3 members. This information is also supported by the mean number of children for married women. Married non-participant women have on average a higher number of children (2.16) than the unemployed (1.78) (See Tables A1 and A2 in the Appendix).

The level of education is generally quite low. 59.9% of the non-participants and 37.8% of the unemployed women received at most a primary school education (See Table A4 in the Appendix) Information on the educational level of husbands, on the other hand, shows that there is a greater gap in the schooling level between the non-

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[3]   See Psacharopoulos and Tzannatos (1992) for selectivity bias for the cases where working women are assumed to represent all women.

participant women and their husbands compared to that between unemployed women and their husbands (See Table A5 and A6 in the Appendix).

Over half of the unemployed women (52.8%) are found to be first generation migrants. Among the non-participants, however, migrant status is more prevalent (70.1%) (See Table A7 in the Appendix).[4]

Model specification

We summarise the explanatory variable set and expected signs below. With the dependent variable Non-Participants taking binary values, we estimate the effects of the factors determining non-participation via a Logistic Regression model which allows the predicted values to range between 0 and 1.[5]

Model 1. All Women

Y = f (B, CLB, AGE, IST, LOW, MID, BE, UNED, PED, SED, HED)

The first model we estimate is for the non-participation behaviour of 911 women.[6] Referring to the above stated candidate variables, we find that region of

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[4] The remaining descriptive information on the characteristics of women is in the Appendix.

[5] Gordon et al. (1994) warn researchers about the choice of technique (probit or logit) in estimating binary dependent variables with large data sets. Our samples of 911 and 559 observations, are both well below the suggested 'relatively low' sample size of 4,000, and much further below the suggested ideal sample size of 10,000. We therefore expect the probit and logit estimates of the coefficients to be close to each other, as Agresti (1996: 79), Maddala (1989: 273) and Neter et al. (1989:584) note for small samples. The logit model is chosen on the basis of practicality in inference and interpretation. We have one reservation, however: the chosen estimates are the outcomes of a *data-mining* search, calling for higher critical values for testing coefficient significance. Since the significance levels for one-sided tests are relatively low, we regard our estimates to be reliable. See Günlük-Şenesen (1994) for a discussion on the consequences of data mining in econometric applications.

[6] During the interviews, out of the total sample of 1022 women, 111 did not declare their level of the household income. Since in Models 1 and 2 household income level is used as a variable to reflect the economic environment faced by women, we were obliged to leave out 111 women and work with a subsample of 911 women in Model 1 and 559 married women in Model 2, who have given

women's origin, size of the family, existence of children, ages of children, number of children and husband's education levels do not have any significance in explaining non-participation.[7]

Our findings indicate that the odds of non-participation decreases for unmarried status and increases with women's age group. It is much more likely for single women and for younger women to participate in the labour force.

Less educated women are more willing to non-participate, compared to university (and higher) graduates. Among the less educated, the ranking of willingness to non-participate is as follows: Primary School Educated, Secondary School Educated and High School Educated. This implies that as the education level increases, women become more willing to participate. Thus education helps to build confidence for women to participate in the labor force. On the other hand, when compared to primary and secondary school educated women, the willingness of the uneducated group to non-participate is lower. This might be related to the possibility that these women mostly belong to lower family income groups.

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full information on the variables used in both models.

[7]   These outcomes are not fully compatible with the findings of Kasnakoğlu and Dayıoğlu (1996) where female labour force is estimated using similar demographic variables: marital status, ages of children, size of the household, family income, education levels of women, ages of women, regions, household head and education of the household head. The structure of the data is one source of variation: we use sample data for currently non-working women from four cities, whereas Kasnakoğlu and Dayıoğlu (1996) use an extensive survey data drawn from the 1987 Household Income and Consumption Expenditures Survey covering 22,464 working or non-working women in Turkey. While Kasnakoğlu and Dayıoğlu (1996) attempt to investigate the participation behaviour of women, we focus on their non-participation behaviour. Secondly, we discriminate between different categories of marital status and those of husband's education level for married women as our variable list indicates. Thirdly, the region variables in our study relate to the women's origins, rather than the residence regions. Our data set does not provide information on the sex of the head of the household. On the other hand, we are able to identify the impact of being a migrant in the urban area on non-participation behaviour.

Table 3

The Explanatory Variables (signs indicate expected direction of effects)

Age	AGE (+)
Marital Status	
Unmarried	B (-)
Married, no children	MNC (-)
Married, with children	MC (+)
Divorced, with children	DC (-)
Size of the Household	SIZE (?)
Region of Origin	
Trakya, Marmara	KTM (?)
West Anatolia	KEB (?)
Middle Anatolia	KI (?)
North Anatolia	KK (?)
East and South East Anatolia	KDG (?)
South Anatolia	KA (?)
City Life Experience	
Since birth	CLB (-)
Recent migrant (<7 years)	CL (+)
Women's Education Level	
Uneducated	UNED (+)
Primary school	PED (+)
Junior high school	SED (-)
High school	HED (-)
Husband's Education Level	
Uneducated	HUNED (+)
Primary school	HPED (+)
Junior high school	HSED (-)
High school	HHED (-)
Children's Age Groups	
0-3 years old	C3 (+)
4-6 years old	C6 (+)
7-9 years old	C9 (-)
Number of Children	NC (+)
Number of Working Members of the Household	BE (+)
Household's Income Level	
Low	LOW (-)
Middle	MID (?)
Dependency Ratio (BE/SIZE)	DR (+)
City of Residence	
İstanbul	IST (?)
Ankara	ANK (?)
İzmir	IZM (?)

Omitted Categories: Marital Status: Divorced, no children (DNC)
Region of Origin: Abroad (KABROAD)
City Life Experience: More than 7 years (CL>7)
Women's Education Level: University (UNIVERSITY)
Husband's Education Level: University (HUNIVERSITY)
Children's Age Groups: 10 + years old (C10)
Household's Income Level: High (HIGH)
City of Residence: Adana (ADANA)

Table 4

Logit Estimates of Model 1

Dependent variable   : NP (Non-participation)
Number of observations :   911

Variable	Coefficient (β_1)	Wald significance	e^{β_1}
constant	-2.181	0.004	
B	-1.281	0.000	0.28
CLB	-0.506	0.008	0.60
AGE	0.027	0.031	1.03
ÝST	-0.573	0.002	0.56
LOW	-1.667	0.001	0.19
MID	-1.228	0.009	0.29
BE	0.227	0.043	1.25
UNED	1.879	0.001	6.54
PED	2.211	0.000	9.13
SED	2.062	0.000	7.86
HED	1.533	0.004	4.63

Chi^2 : 122.51 (signif : 0.000)
Count R^2 : 0.791
Mc Fadden's R^2 : 0.13

Generally speaking, we find that education has a positive effect on non-participation while income has a negative effect. This result might seem contradictory. It should be noted, however, that in Turkey there is no clear association between a women's educational attainment and her income level or the income level of her household. Partially, this lack of relationship might be because of the gap between the education level of men and women in favour of men implying that most women are married to men who have a higher education level than they do. Model 1 indicates that women from the low and middle-income family groups are less willing to non-participate relative to those in high family income groups, the willingness being less for the low income group.

Willingness to non-participate is positively affected by the number of the breadwinners in the household, which is an expected outcome. However, contrary to our expectations, the dependency ratio in the family, supposedly a more informative variable than the number of the breadwinners which might move in the same direction with the size of the family, is not found to be significant.

Finally, willingness to non-participate decreases for women who were born in the city they were interviewed, compared to migrant women regardless of their

duration of stay in the city. Being exposed to city life-style since birth might act as a confidence building factor for women to perceive themselves as candidates in the labour force. Migrant women on the contrary, might still feel unable to integrate with city life norms. It is interesting to note that relative to other cities, residence in İstanbul is a contributing factor to willingness to participate. The metropolitan nature of İstanbul naturally offers a wider scope of employment opportunities, either formal or informal.

Model 2. Married Women

$Y = f$ (CLB, IST, LOW, MID, DR, UNED, PED, SED, HED, NC, HPED)

The second model we estimate is for the non-participation behaviour of the sub-sample of 559 married women. As was observed with Model 1 findings, being unmarried is the only significant marital status which affects participation behaviour. This calls for a separate study of married women to outline, if possible, factors specific to them.

Table 5
Logit Estimates of Model 2

Dependent variable   : NPM   (Non-participation of married women)
Number of observations : 559

Variable	Coefficient (β_i)	Wald significance	$e^{\beta i}$
constant	-1.638	0.023	
CLB	-0.506	0.019	0.60
ÝST	-0.454	0.031	0.64
LOW	-1.958	0.001	0.14
MID	-1.532	0.008	0.22
DR	1.145	0.047	3.14
UNED	2.061	0.003	7.86
PED	2.483	0.000	11.98
SED	2.296	0.000	9.94
HED	1.569	0.011	4.80
NC	0.279	0.002	1.32
HPED	-0.609	0.008	0.54

Chi^2 : 59.60 (signif : 0.000)
Count R^2 : 0.713
Mc Fadden's R^2 : 0.09

As we had postulated earlier, unmarried young women consider themselves as candidates for employment, which is altered with marriage (either with or without children). Therefore we want to find out which factors keep married women away from participation in the labour force. We observe similar impacts as in Model 1 regarding the education levels of married women. However, the education levels of the husband, except at the primary school level, are not found significant. The hypothesis that the tolerance of the husband for the wife's employment increases as the husband's education level improves is not supported.

Married women's participation in the labour force has a more obligatory nature: those women in the lower income group are significantly more willing to work as well as those in families where there are fewer breadwinners relative to the size. In other words, women in lower family income groups and those in lower dependency ratio families are less likely to non-participate. It is therefore expected that as the income situation improves, women will not prefer to choose employment as a means of socialisation. Then, the housekeeping role would be manifested, as is generally perceived in Turkey: women work because of necessity.

On the other hand, it is not the age groups of children, but the number of children which keep married women from working outside the home, reflecting the fact that mother-child dependency continues well into the ages above 10. This is because affordable child care facilities (outside the family) are almost nil in Turkey and also a great majority of women, across all ages and backgrounds, share the view that children are best looked after by their own mother.

The direction and magnitudes of the effects of CLB and IST on non-participation behaviour of married women in Model 2 are found to be similar to the Model 1 findings.

4. Final remarks

The findings of Model 1 and Model 2 indicate the importance of the role of women as "wives and mothers" in the household as a determinant of non-participation. The gradual fall in fertility rates since the 1950s does not seem to have a significant impact on women's labour force participation. The widely accepted norm is that looking after children is the responsibility of women and the lack of child-care facilities are considered to have a significant impact on this outcome. The relatively high participation rates among unmarried women also suggest that even

though women have a positive attitude towards occupational life, this desire cannot be easily realised due to the intra-household division of labour.

The high non-participation of women in the urban labour force can also be explained by the high number of first generation migrants in the big cities. With low educational background and no experience with the city life and working conditions, these women tend not to participate in the labour force unless the financial need of the family forces them to.

This study adopted a supply-side approach to women's non-participation in the urban labour force. However, we assume that supply and demand factors are not mutually exclusive but have interactive and feedback effects on women's non-participation decisions. For example, working conditions offered by the labour market which are not compatible with women's household responsibilities have significant effects on women's decisions on whether or not to participate. Thus, we suggest future research to be directed, on the one hand, to a more elaborate investigation of the family factors and the role of women within the household and on the other hand, to demand factors such as working conditions, discrimination at work and employers' prejudices.

Appendix

Table A1

Means and Standard Deviations of Variables

n : 1022

Variable	Total	Non-participants	Unemployed
AGE	28.97	32.40	27.99
	(8.47)	(8.56)	(8.19)
SIZE	4.37	4.36	4.37
	(1.64)	(1.60)	(1.66)
BE	1.22	1.31	1.20
	(0.83)	(0.92)	(0.81)
NC	1.28	1.93	1.09
	(1.37)	(1.42)	(1.30)
DR	0.29	0.31	0.29
	(019)	(0.20)	(0.18)

Table A2

Means and Standard Deviations of Variables for Married Women

n : 643

Variable	Total	Non-participants	Unemployed
AGE	31.98	33.27	31.4
	(7.46)	(7.96)	(7.17)
SIZE	4.14	4.31	4.06
	(1.47)	(1.45)	(1.51)
BE	1.18	1.29	1.12
	(0.68)	(0.84)	(0.60)
NC	1.90	2.16	1.78
	(1.26)	(1.30)	(1.22)
DR	0.31	0.32	0.30
	(0.17)	(0.19)	(0.16)

Table A3
Marital Status

Marital Status	Total		Non-participantss		Unemployed	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Unmarried	334	32.6	24	10.6	310	39.0
Married, no children	68	6.7	12	5.3	56	7.0
Married, with children	573	56.1	185	81.4	388	48.8
Divorced/widowed, no children	9	0.9	2	0.9	7	0.9
Divorced/widowed, with children	38	3.7	4	1.8	34	4.3
Total	1022	100.0	227	100.0	795	100.0

Table A4
Women's Level of Education

Level of Education	Total		Non-participants		Unemployed	
	Number		Number		Number	%
Uneducated	85	8.3	30	13.2	55	6.9
Primary School	352	34.4	106	46.7	246	30.9
Secondary School	322	31.5	48	21.1	274	34.5
High School	161	15.8	37	16.3	124	15.6
High Education	102	10.0	6	2.7	96	12.1
Total	1022	100.0	227	100.0	795	100.0

Table A5
Married Women's Level of Education

Level of Education	Total		Non-participants		Unemployed	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Uneducated	69	10.7	27	13.7	42	9.4
Primary School	261	40.6	96	48.7	165	37.0
Junior High School	159	24.7	37	18.8	122	27.4
High School	104	16.2	32	16.3	72	16.1
High Education	50	7.8	5	2.5	45	10.1
Total	643	100.0	197	100.0	446	100.0

Table A6
Husband's Level of Education

Level of Education	Total		Non-participants		Unemployed	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Uneducated	32	5.0	14	7.1	18	4.0
Primary School	231	35.9	67	34.0	164	36.8
Junior High School	110	17.1	43	21.8	67	15.0
High School	155	24.1	45	22.9	110	24.7
High Education	115	17.9	28	14.2	87	19.5
Total	643	100.0	197	100.0	446	100.0

Table A7
Duration of Stay in the City

Duration	Total		Non-participants		Unemployed	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Since birth	443	43.4	68	29.9	375	47.2
Less than 7 years	169	16.5	41	18.1	128	16.1
More than 7 years	410	40.1	118	52.0	292	36.7
Total	1022	100.0	227	100.0	795	100.0

Table A8
Region of Origin

Region	Total		Non-participants		Unemployed	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Marmara	155	15.2	34	15.0	121	15.2
West Anatolia	141	13.8	28	12.3	113	14.2
Middle Anatolia	287	28.1	67	29.5	220	27.7
Black Sea	141	13.8	35	15.4	106	13.3
East and South-East Anatolia	158	15.4	31	13.7	127	16.0
Mediterranean	118	11.5	30	13.2	88	11.1
Abroad	22	2.2	2	0.9	20	2.5
Total	1022	100.0	227	100.0	795	100.0

Table A9
City of Residence

City	Total Number	%	Non-participants Number	%	Unemployed Number	%
İstanbul	481	47.1	107	47.1	374	47.1
Ankara	217	21.2	50	22.0	167	21.0
İzmir	189	18.5	41	18.1	148	18.6
Adana	135	13.2	29	12.8	106	13.3
Total	1022	100.0	227	100.0	795	100.0

Table A10
Children's Age

Age Groups	Total Number	%	Non-participants Number	%	Unemployed Number	%
0-3 years old	185	27.6	52	26.5	133	28.0
4-6 years old	174	25.9	52	26.5	122	25.7
7-11 years old	244	36.4	80	40.8	164	34.5
11+ years old	68	10.1	12	6.2	56	11.8
Total	671	100.0	196	100.0	475	100.0

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Özet

Türkiye'de kadınların kentsel işgücü piyasasına katılmamalarının nedenleri

Bu çalışmadaki amaç Türkiye'de kentsel kesimdeki kadınların işgücüne katılmama kararlarındaki nedenleri araştırmaktır. Çalışmada, kadınların, sosyo-demografik özellikleri ve aile yapılarını dikkate alan bir yaklaşım benimsenmiştir. Kullanılan veriler 1995 Sonbahar döneminde Türkiye'nin dört büyük kentinde gerçekleşen anketlerden toplanmıştır. Kadınların işgücü piyasasına katılmama kararlarının ardında yatan nedenlere, biri tüm kadınlar için, diğeri evli kadınlar için, iki 'lojistik' regresyon modeliyle bakılmıştır. Bu modellerden çıkan bulgular, kadınları evdeki 'eş ve anne' rollerinin işgücüne katılmamalarında önemli bir etken olduğunu göstermektedir.