



PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION IN TURKEY: THE EXAMPLES OF THE JDP AND THE RPP*

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ABSTRACT

Are there differences between the approach of women's economic participation in right-wing parties and left-wing parties? This article pursues this question by focusing on two ideologically opposed political parties in Turkey, the JDP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, The Justice and Development Party) and the RPP (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, The Republican People's Party). The conservative-democratic JDP has headed a single-party government since 2002, which has resulted in the social-democratic RPP operating as the main opposition party ever since. The field research for this study rests on three pillars. The first of these is made up of party documents, that is to say programs, statutes and internal publications. The main publications of the parties are *Türkiye Bülteni* (Turkey's Bulletin) for the AKP and *Halk* (The People) for the CHP. As the second pillar of the research, two dailies, one from the center right (*Yeni Şafak* - The New Dawn) and the other from the center left (*Cumhuriyet* - The Republic), have been chosen. The third component of the research is made up of interviews with at least one man and one woman from every level of hierarchy in each of these parties (i.e. main office administration, youth branches' administration and women's branches' administration at the district, provincial and national levels). Men and women grassroots politicians as well as at least one woman and one man from the municipal councils of specific districts, provinces and in the parliament were also interviewed. In their party programs, both the JDP and the RPP support women's economic participation, and they make similar promises to voters. The male members of the JDP have the most conservative view on this issue whereas the women of the JDP think more like the members of the RPP than the male members of their own party. Our data supports the literature that argues that women in right-wing parties adopt more egalitarian values on gender related issues than the men of their own parties.

Key Words: women, employment, JDP, RPP

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TÜRKİYE'DE KADINLARIN EKONOMİK HAYATA KATILIMININ ALGILANMASI: AKP VE CHP ÖRNEKLERİ

ÖZET

Sağ ve sol kanattaki siyasi partilerin kadınların ekonomik katılımına yaklaşımlarında farklılıklar var mıdır? Bu makale işte bu soruya Türkiye'deki, ideolojik olarak zıt oldukları var sayılan iki siyasi parti, AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) ile CHP'ye (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*) odaklanarak cevap aramaktadır. Araştırmanın muhafazakar-demokrat olan partisi AKP ülkede 2002'den beri tek başına hükümeti kurmuş, sosyal-demokrat CHP ise bu çerçevede dahilinde ana muhalefet partisi olarak yer almıştır. Bu çalışmanın saha araştırması üç ana eksene dayanmaktadır. Bu eksenlerden birincisi, parti dokümanlarıdır ve partilerin programları, tüzükleri ve düzenli yayınlarını içerir. Partilerin düzenli yayınları, AKP için *Türkiye Bülteni*, CHP için *Halk'tır*. Araştırmanın ikinci ekseni olarak, biri merkez solda (*Cumhuriyet Gazetesi*), diğeri merkez-sağda (*Yeni Şafak Gazetesi*) olmak üzere seçilmiş iki gazete bulunmaktadır. Araştırmanın üçüncü ekseni ise, partilerin farklı hiyerarşi seviyelerinden en az bir erkek ve bir kadın siyasetçiyle yapılan röportajlardır. Bu röportajlar, ilçe, il ve genel merkezde, yönetim kurulu, gençlik kolları yönetimi ve kadın kolları yönetiminde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Ayrıca, erkek ve kadın taban siyasetçileri, ilçe ve il belediye meclislerinden ve Parlamento'dan en az bir kadın ve bir erkek siyasetçi de röportaj kapsamına alınmıştır. İki siyasi partinin programlarına göre, hem AKP hem de CHP kadınların çalışmasını desteklemektedir ve de her iki siyasi parti de bu konuda seçmenlere benzeri sözler vermektedir. Röportaj yapılan siyasetçi grupları içinde, AKP'li erkekler, kadınların çalışması konusuna dair en muhafazakar yaklaşımlarda bulunan kesimi oluşturmaktadır. Öte yandan, AKP'li kadınlar ise kendi siyasi partilerinin erkek üyelerinden çok, CHP'nin üyeleri gibi düşünmektedir. Bu çalışmanın verileri, sağ kanat siyasi partilerdeki kadınların eşitlikçi değerleri kendi partilerindeki erkeklerden daha fazla benimsediğine dair literatürü desteklemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kadınlar, istihdam, AKP, CHP

Introduction

Turkey's wish to enter the European Union and its official candidacy since 1999 have pushed the country to focus on issues that have been neglected for a long time. The issue of gender equality has entered the political agenda as part of this process. Women's issues, such as girls' school enrollment, violence against women, use of headscarf in the public arena, as well as participation in economic and political life, have attracted more attention than ever in the press. This article portrays one of these women's issues, *the perception of women's economic participation in Turkey*, by a right-wing and a left-wing Turkish political party.

The two political parties under consideration here are the JDP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, The Justice and Development Party) and the RPP (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, The Republican People's Party). These two parties win most of the votes in Turkey. The JDP has headed a single-party government since 2002, which has resulted in the RPP as operating the main opposition party

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ever since. The JDP won 47 percent of the popular vote in 2007 and 50 percent in 2011, while the RPP won 21 percent and 26 percent respectively (Ntvmsnbc Seçim 2011: <http://secim2011.ntvmsnbc.com/>).

The JDP and the RPP are ideologically different from one another. The JDP declares itself to be both conservative and democratic. Although it has embraced many politicians from all right-wing parties, its leading staff comes from former Islamist parties (Feroz, 2005: 172-173). Some of the JDP's actions (starting with a proposal to criminalize adultery, later withdrawn) have given the impression that the party rulers have a hidden Islamist agenda (Hale, 2006: 79). Meanwhile, the RPP is the party established by Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey. It declares itself to be both secular and social democratic but does occasionally play the religion card for electoral purposes (Öymen, 2005: 326). In fact, it is hard for a political party to achieve strong electoral results in Turkey without taking into consideration people's religious sensitivities.

1. The research

The field research for this study rests on three pillars. The first of these is made up by the party documents, that is to say programs, statutes and internal publications. The main publications of the parties are *Türkiye Bülteni* (Turkey Bulletin) for the JDP and *Halk* (The People) for the RPP. As the second pillar of the research, two dailies, one from the center right (*Yeni Şafak* - The New Dawn) and the other one from the center left (*Cumhuriyet* - The Republic), have been chosen. *Yeni Şafak* was founded in 1995 and has a daily circulation of approximately 110,000. It has close links with the JDP. *Cumhuriyet* was founded in 1924 and has a daily circulation of 60,000. It supports secularism ardently and might be considered as the newspaper closest to the RPP. The research period is limited to the years after the Helsinki Summit in December 1999. This is the year the European Union officially accepted Turkey's candidacy for accession. The third component of the research is made up of interviews with at least one man and one woman from every level of hierarchy in each of these parties (i.e. main office administration, youth branches' administration and women's branches' administration at the district, provincial and national level). Men and women grassroots politicians as well as at least one woman and one man from the municipal councils of specific districts, provinces and in the parliament were also interviewed. The most populated city of Turkey, Istanbul, and the capital, Ankara, represent the municipal and the national levels. Two districts in Istanbul were also focused on. These are Kadıköy, for the RPP, because it is widely known as the party's fortress and Beykoz, for the JDP because of its clear support of the JDP.

TABLE1. General Information On The Interviewees

	Man	Woman	Total
JDP	12	16	28
RPP	10	15	25
Total	22	31	53

The party programs, statutes and the internal publications were read first. Then, the dailies were read at the Atatürk Halk Kütüphanesi (The Atatürk Public Library) in the Taksim district of Istanbul. Finally, interviews were conducted with the party members described above between November 2006 and February 2007. The transcripts reports were treated through the qualitative data analysis software Atlas-ti. As for the treatment of the dailies, all news regarding the activities of female members of the two parties was taken into consideration. Microsoft Excel charts were prepared to sort out the results and make comparisons.

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2. A general approach towards women's economic participation

In Turkey, despite the fact women have been a part of the economic life since the foundation of the republic, men are still considered bread-winners of the family, whereas women - even when they work- are considered the primary responsible for housework (Peker, 1996: 7-37). There is a gap between the rate of women's economic participation in Turkey and the 50 percent participation reported among the OECD (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries. According to the statistics, women's economic participation in Turkey was actually on the decline until 2008. For example, the rate of women's economic participation was 72 percent in 1955, 43 percent in 1985, 24.8 percent in 2005 (Sayın, 2007: 16). The rate began to increase as of 2008, and in August 2012, women's economic participation was reported at 30.1 percent (Bianet, January 3, 2013). Turkey has made particular effort in order to raise women's economic participation rates (Korkmaz et al, 2013: 1846). Also, in 2013, the JDP government started to work on "flexible work schedules" in order to increase both women's working rates and maternity leave rights (Sabah, October 14, 2013).

According to research on Turkey conducted in 2003, which was based on face-to-face interviews with 1138 women, 17.9 percent of women reported that men in their families were against the idea of them looking for work. 23.4 percent reported that they stayed home because they have young children. 17 percent has unsuccessfully looked for work. 7.8 percent believed the women's place was at home (Kalaycıoğlu & Toprak, 2004: 549).

Research conducted by TÜSİAD (Türk Sanayicileri ve İşadamları Derneği, The Turkish Industry and Business Association), advances that the rise in women's economic participation in Turkey is linked with changes in the economic structure, social transformations and mass migration from little villages to big cities (TÜSİAD, 2000: 129). The report notes that women are highly active in economic activities between the ages of 20-24 (39.6 percent). After the age of 25, marriage, housework and other domestic labour negatively impact on women's economic participation. The alienation of women from economic life is observed in other "traditional" countries as well. For instance, according to the OECD data, in Japan, 60 percent of women - including those who have higher education degrees- resign from their jobs when they have their first child (*Le point*, November 18, 2009).

Regarding Turkey, as in other Muslim countries, there is a general belief that women are under-represented in the economic sphere because of their religion. However, there is no interdiction on women's work in Islam. For instance, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, director in the Pakistanese Islamist parti *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islami*, believes that Muslim women can contribute to the economy if they choose (Arat, 2005: 98; *Newslines*, 3.7.2003). Even though the recommendation that women take care of the home appears in *hadiths* (reports of statements or actions of Islamic prophet Muhammad), The Presidency of Religious Affairs in Turkey supports women's economic participation. According to a decision of The High Committee of Religious Affairs, a woman and a man have the same rights and liberties. A woman might work both within and outside home. Spousal roles might vary according to family need, as long as there is peace at home (Diyaret, 24.10.2002). Middle East specialist Shirin Shukri has attributed that the low participation of Muslim women in the economic life is linked to the indecision at the level of the state towards women, as well as economic crises and under-industrialisation (Shukri, 1999: 31).

The existence of care services has also an important impact on women's work. Women are the ones who take care of babies, children, sick, old or handicapped family members. They also care for the home (i.e. grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, washing the dishes, doing the laundry, ironing). Around the world, they generally tend to be the ones who do social voluntary work

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(Antonopoulos, 2008; Toksöz, 2012: 6). These factors, rather than religion, are tangible factors limiting women's participation in the economic life.

3. The approaches of the JDP and RPP towards women's economic participation

The party programs of both the JDP and the RPP make mention of the necessity of women's employment and do not exhibit major ideological differences in ideology. The conservative-democratic JDP promises to do what is necessary for women's economic participation while taking into account women's responsibilities regarding children and family (JDP party program, 2001: 34). The party's consideration of women's familial responsibilities positions its ideology along the lines of those of Christian democrats. Still, the party promises to eliminate gender discrimination in the economic life and to provide equal salary for equal work (idem). The social-democratic RPP promises to work on a National Women's Employment Policy so that women can achieve their financial independence, contribute as much as possible to the economic development of the country, get professional trainings and benefit from positive recruitment opportunities (RPP, 2011: 53, 56, 57, 151).

According to the JDP, women's economic and political participation is a sign of modernity (*Cumhuriyet*, December 6, 2003: 4; *Cumhuriyet*, October 12, 2003: 5; *Cumhuriyet*, October 13, 2003: 5). We can easily find declarations supporting women's economic participation. First of all, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan has expressed the belief that a country's level of progress is parallel to the position, respect, rights and responsibilities of its women. Erdoğan is also sensitive to women's exploitation in the economic life (*Türkiye Bülteni*, April 2007). For example, he asserted that women performing unregistered work are being particularly exploited (*Yeni Şafak*, November 28, 2008, 5). The prime minister's wife, Emine Erdoğan, has complained that women do not have enough roles in economic, political and social spheres (*Cumhuriyet*, March 9, 2005: 7). In 2008, the president of women's branches in the JDP, Fatma Şahin declared that her priority was to increase women's economic participation (*Türkiye Bülteni*, January 2008). Last but not least, Zeynep Karahan Uslu, deputy from Istanbul and also a Doctor of Sociology, is sensitive to issues of gender equality. She submitted a proposal for a legal amendment that would allow men to also become nurses (*Yeni Şafak*, May 30, 2006: 13).

This support for women's economic participation, however, has not eliminated the conservative disposition of many members of the party. For instance, on World Women's Day in 2004, Emine Erdoğan declared that women do not want to conflict with their nature and are aware of their weight and place in life (*Cumhuriyet*, March 8, 2004: 6). Emine Erdoğan, although she said there was no excuse for gender discrimination, also expressed that the country's progress should not come at the expense of its fundamental values (*Türkiye Bülteni*, September 2005; *Türkiye Bülteni*, April 2005). The implication seemed to be that women should contribute to economic life without forgetting their familial responsibilities. Some male members of the JDP think that "working women should not behave capriciously at home". However, according to one very conservative male member of the party, women's work is acceptable only in the case of familial financial stain. According to this view, a woman's duty is to take care of her child, and that women's economic participation is not a part of Turkish tradition:

The wives of people who are financially at ease do not work, others' wives work. In my close circle, everyone works. Since my family's financial situation is good and since we are closely attached to our traditions, my wife does not work. I mean she is taking care of her child (...) A woman's place is always her home (...) When there is a career in question, then what happens? Then people would not look after their child (male, 28 years old, high school graduate, office-boy in the party, grassroots politician, JDP, Interview conducted on November 8, 2006 in Istanbul).

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The declaration above belongs to a grassroots politician who is not financially prosperous. However, his attachment to his interpretation of tradition makes it impossible for him to conceive of his wife working. In other parts of his interview, he also mentioned that the concept of “honor” was very important to him. There is a connection between an emphasis on honor and the belief that women should not work, since women would be meeting and interacting with other men in public sphere. However, this conservative approach does not exist in the discourse of the party leaders.

While there is the question of “fundamental values” in the discourse of the JDP, in the RPP, there is no condition for women’s contribution to the economy. Gender equality is considered a principal necessity for humans. Under the RPP, equal participation of men and women in private and public life and equal sharing of responsibilities would be the ruling policy in Turkey (*Halk*, March 27, 2001: 7). In its election manifesto, the RPP also promises positive discrimination towards women in recruitment and promotion processes in both the public and private sectors (RPP, 2011: 17). The RPP encourages female entrepreneurship and pledges to improve care services for children and the elderly in order to pave the way for women’s increased participation in economic life (idem.: 24, 32). Homemakers and peasant women would be additionally considered under labour law (Also, see *Halk*, July 1, 2007: 12).

The RPP supports women’s participation in the work force and accuses the JDP of *de facto* opposition to women’s economic participation. For instance, on World Women’s Day in 2008, female deputies of the RPP, Bihlun Tamaylıgil, Fatma Nur Serter, Birgen Keleş, Necla Arat, Nevin Gaye Erbatır, Güldal Mumcu, Canan Aritman, Özlem Çerçioğlu and Nesrin Baytok made a press declaration. According to the declaration, the JDP tries to eliminate the rights of working women. According to those women, the JDP, while defending the right of headscarved women to attend university, was trying to eliminate the rights of working women (*Halk*, April 15, 2008: 1, 6). This view was echoed in interviews with the party members as well. One of the party directors, Bihlun Tamaylıgil (42 years old) has pointed out that men rather than women are appointed to posts in several public institutions, as was the case with the Central Bank and the Ministry of Forest and Water Affairs (Interview conducted on February 10, 2007 in Ankara). For Tamaylıgil, because of the JDP, “Turkey is heading in a very bad direction”. Some of Tamaylıgil’s complaints might be right, but we should not forget that female members of the JDP are also critical of the same issues. For instance, female minister of the JDP cabinet, Nimet Baş (formerly Nimet Çubukçu), has similarly complained that some positions in public institutions are only open to men. According to Baş, this is contrary to the existing laws and to the prime minister’s own directive on equality in recruitment (*Yeni Şafak*, May 30, 2006: 1, 13; *Yeni Şafak*, January 28, 2007: 6).

News on the RPP’s support of women’s political participation can be found in the dailies like *Cumhuriyet* and *Yeni Şafak*, but news on economic participation is almost inexistent. The president of women’s branches of the Kadıköy district of Istanbul, Aykut Dağyeli, on World Women’s Day in 2000, asserted that women are economically, socially and politically exploited (*Cumhuriyet*, March 9, 2000: 17). This is a rare example of a declaration regarding the RPP’s support for women’s economic participation. It is possible that women’s economic participation is non-existent in the RPP discourse, because among the party’s voter base this is taken for granted. Meanwhile the JDP is more active in its efforts to pull women out of the home and to infuse the notion of women’s economic participation with more positive connotations to its voter base.

3.1. The conservative approach of the JDP

The male members of the JDP were the most conservative of all interviewees for this research, and women’s economic participation is one area in which this conservatism is easily observed. For instance, according to a director in the youth branches in the Beykoz district of

Istanbul, women's economic participation in mixed-gender settings negatively impacts efficiency in the workplace and is a degenerative societal factor:

I think that when women are present in public life, the concept of family gets harmed. This is my own personal belief, and it has nothing to do with my party. I mean, when you look at workplaces, women naturally bring an other element into the environment. However, I read in the newspaper - it was research conducted in Japan, if I am not mistaken- the performance level in an office where women and men work together decreases, because workers get distracted. But when same sex people are together, performance is high (...) What happened [to our society]? Women were pushed into public life suddenly, so our society got stupefied. Women cheated on their husbands. Husbands became friends with second and third women. Some people are bothered by all this. I am one of those people. A social degeneration has occurred and this will have its echo in family life (male, 28 years old, high school graduate, civil servant, director in the youth branches in Beykoz district, JDP, Interview conducted on November 7, 2007 in Istanbul).

Despite his young age, this politician has trouble accepting the presence of women in the workplace. He also mentioned in other parts of his interview that women's economic independence would lead to overly high expectations of men. He thinks that one of the reasons women get married is to find financial support, and if a working woman does not need a man, this is detrimental to both the institution of family and to the social structure of the country.

Another conservative approach in the JDP is to index women's "nature" of getting married and starting a family. According to this approach, women's economic participation is not appropriate for their psychological dispositions, which negatively impacts them while in the workplace:

If you look at a girl, the first toy she has in her hand is a doll. Most of them would even have a baby doll in a bride dress. Women are raised (...) with this psychology (...) I think that women do not have the psychological preparation to deal with this primary responsibility weighing on their minds while they push for a presence in a secondary arena. A woman wants to be a very good mother, a very good spouse. On one hand, she wants to keep going without neglecting her primary social role; on the other hand, she wants to declare to herself and to society that she can exist in social life, politics and civil society. Turkey is living a period of transition (...) I think women's problems arise from the fact that they remain in between many arenas (male, 30 years old, college graduate, tradesman, member of the Central Decision-Making and Administrative Committee, JDP, Interview conducted on February 5, 2007 in Ankara).

In the passage above, the politician mentions the role conflict women find themselves in. Research conducted in the U.S. and Canada had described the conflicts working women are confronted with, in terms of the negative impact on emotional and physical health, as well as on life satisfaction. Full-time working women suffer from stress (Schieman, et al., March 2003: 138). From this perspective, the politician is right to talk about women's psychological uneasiness. However, this male member of the JDP does not suggest any solutions to this problem, like the common example of men sharing in household responsibilities.

The politician also revealed a logical flaw in his argument when he suggested that girls choose dolls as toys. American psychologist Nancy Felipe Russo exposed what she termed the *motherhood mandate* in the 1970s. Parents encourage their daughters to have dolls, so they would learn behaviours that are thought to be needed in the future (Russo, 1976: 143-153; Russo, 1976: 7-15). In other words, what the JDP politician described as women's nature is at least in part a

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learned behaviour. Having a baby is considered as a complementary part of a woman's identity. French psychologist Anne Dafflon-Novelle has expressed similar ideas. Parents raise their children according to their gender ideals. They lead boys to toys that help them improve their manipulation, productivity and reasoning talents, and girls to toys that prepare them for homemaking and motherhood (Dafflon-Novelle, 2006).

In 2006, Prometheus Consulting Firm conducted a research project in Turkey, in which it interviewed 400 women between the ages 23-40 on their perceptions of the notion of "having enough time for a family". The results showed that 62 percent of women felt unhappy, 71 percent of women felt hopeless regarding their future (NTVMSNBC, March 13, 2006). This sense of unhappiness was said to have been because they did not have enough time to establish a family, have children and spend time with their families. Furthermore, they were also unhappy about a sense of patriarchalism and clientalism that favors men, results in unjust salaries, as well as the stress of remaining jobless. This research shows that women's unhappiness was related to social factors they faced, rather than to their nature. This supports feminist theory which has longed argued that motherhood is not naturally given but socially constructed and which defies systems in which women are legitimized only through their identities as wives or mothers (Tahon, 2003: 63; Knibiehler, 2001: 13-22; Mathieu, 1977; Engeli, April 2009: 203).

Another male member of the JDP mentioned menstruation and bodily functions related to motherhood as having a negative impact on women in the workforce. Women's employment, therefore, was not a good idea:

Women experience a monthly illness because of their nature. This illness is worse than ten cases of the flu in a row, both psychologically and physically speaking. However women cannot demand leave for this, either in the public or in the private sector. It would be disgraceful, she would not demand it (...) But this is a serious problem (...) And a woman does not have the right to ask for a two-days-leave for this. (...) There are problems related to pregnancy, problems related to breastfeeding. Can she feel better around four-and-a half months after labour? These are serious problems (...) There is no nursery close to work. (...) Childcare is a serious problem. Pregnancy is a problem, post-pregnancy is a serious problem. [Women] go through psychological traumas. This can become chronic. These are problems (male, 36 years old, high school graduate, tradesman, member of municipality in Beykoz district, JDP, Interview conducted on November 8, 2006 in Istanbul).

The passage above belongs to the only man who had the courage to talk about menstruation, though he mentioned menstruation and pregnancy only to highlight their negative impact on women's economic participation. Many feminist researchers see and show the other side of the coin. According to them, men look for power and rulership precisely, because they are jealous of women's menstruation and ability to give birth. Austrian-born American psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim thinks that men rule over women, in order to compensate for their frustration over the fact that women are the productive sex. French psychoanalyst Irène Diamantis underlines that motherhood is power, and men, who want to get away from the motherhood reality, produce outdoors. The french sociologist Eugène Enriquez argues that women are the *guards of temporality*, because pregnancy and menstruation make them conscious of time and deaths; since men do not have the same capacity, they create the illusion of this type of power through earning power, honor and wealth (Bettelheim, 1971: 53; Diamantis, 1997: 173; Enriquez, 1986: 392). Australian literature specialist Germaine Greer argues that menstruation is considered shameful and secret, except when it is being used to explain the unappropriateness of women's presence in the workplace (Greer, 1991 [1971]: 59). The french philosopher Luce Irigaray has also a similar

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approach (Irigaray, 1993). However, the male member of the JDP quoted the above uses for exactly the same purpose. In other parts of the interview, he also noted that young women may work to prepare their dowries, but that after marriage, they prefer taking care of their families.

3.2. Similarities and differences

According to the majority of the JDP and the RPP members, the main obstacle to women's economic participation in Turkey comes from the social expectations; that is, the expectation that they should take care of the home. RPP members are more inclined to emphasize the patriarchal dimension in society. According to them, in order to bring women into the workforce without homelife suffering, some aspects of the patriarchal social structure should be redistributed.

A woman is a mother. A woman is a spouse. A woman must stay at home. A woman cannot come home later than her husband. When a husband shows up, his meal should be ready. When he wakes up his shirt should be ironed. A husband should be sent off to work by his wife. When you look at all these, a woman's time for participation in the economic and political life is highly limited (...) Therefore, so that our women can have more of a presence in the economic and political life, we need to change our men's reasoning structure (*laughter*). We need to change our men first (...) In order to see women in the political and economic life, we need to let them breathe. Nowadays, when you look at the women who are successful in these two domains, they are either single, having eliminated marriage from their lives, or they are rare cases with supporting spouses. I mean they have spouses to share their life with, I mean a true sharing of life (female, 34 years old, journalist, press counsellor, provincial branch, Istanbul, RPP, Interview conducted on November 27, 2007 in Istanbul).

In the passage above, the idea of equal sharing of work at home is expressed. This may appear to be a part of social-democratic approach. However, according to a male RPP politician, the main problem is societal acceptance of women's economic participation. He asserted that some regions in Turkey are still ruled by traditional values, and that this is the most problematic issue for working women:

Let me give an example. One of our teacher friends, who was raised in our youth branches who went to (...) eastern Turkey for the first time as a teacher. A female teacher. The society she went to is a closed society. She taught in a village. After a while, the village stood up saying "We do not want a female teacher". The teacher's house was vandalized. The rural police intervened. The teacher was appointed to another village. I mean, the society did not allow this female teacher teach there. This is the real problem that needs to be resolved. Women's entrance into the economic life is not something based on women's own will power. We need to make our society ready for this. And the method to obtain this passes through politics (male, 35 years old, college graduate, tradesman, ex-president of the youth branches, member of the Party Assembly, RPP, Interview conducted on February 9, 2007 in Ankara).

Here we have the idea that women's wish to work is not enough on its own to achieve their economic participation. The experience that a female lawyer (32 years old) from the directorate of the RPP's Istanbul provincial branch elaborated on this. Some of her male colleagues, she reported, believe women should not be lawyers, an opinion she could not comprehend since it was not a physical profession- a common explanation for such opinions on women's workforce participation. But this example is an opportunity to share some data on the Turkish female lawyers. The Union of Turkish Bar Associations Women's Law Commission (*Türkiye Barolar Birliği Kadın Hukuku Komisyonu*) conducted a survey of 3063 lawyers. According to the results, in Turkey, 4 percent of female lawyers are raped, 84 percent are sexually harassed and 71 percent are victims of violence.

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16 percent of female lawyers report discrimination from co-workers (Arınan, May 22, 2012: 3). This shows us that even if women have the skill to participate in various economic spheres, sometimes the rest of the society is not ready to welcome them wholeheartedly.

Regarding women's economic participation, the female members of the JDP have the tendency to think like the members of the RPP. For instance, according to Fatma Şahin, who was a deputy at the time of our interview and who became Minister of Family and Social Policies in 2011, the *glass ceiling* is the primary obstacle to women's economic and political participation (Interview conducted on February 6, 2007 in Ankara). Şahin also cited the *glass ceiling* as a problem in public recruitment and workplace promotions, in her official capacity as cabinet minister (Ulusoy & Esen, October 19, 2011: 3).

A female member of the RPP, Nevin Gaye Erbatur, who had worked on gender issues in an academic setting, shared some details on the issue of *glass ceiling*. According to her, as a woman's career progresses and she comes in line for promotions or positions of great responsibility, she is encouraged to retire and return home (Interview conducted on February 14, 2007 in Ankara). Along these lines, Erbatur, in her press declarations, has criticized the JDP for not prioritizing women's economic participation and not increasing the number of female directors (Arınan, October 14, 2010: 7).

Female members of the RPP have also underlined some other dimensions of patriarchalism. For instance, according to Nevin Gaye Erbatur, women are made redundant more readily than men. The female members of the RPP have supported this line of the argument. However, the interviewees who defined housework as a real job are the members of the JDP rather than the members of the RPP. A female member of the municipal assembly in Istanbul (38 years old) named homemakers as "house workers". She argued that housework and childcare are forms of labour that should be taken under the social security framework. This surely is an old feminist demand. British political scientist Carole Pateman compares the exploitation of homemakers to the exploitation of workers in the capitalist system. According to Pateman, women are bound by marriage and workers by an employment contract (Pateman, 1988: 8). French researcher Christine Delphy also sees similarities between the capitalist system and the patriarchal system. She was one of the first researchers to express the view that housework was real work, in her book *The Main Enemy* (Delphy, 1970).

In the interviews, with some exceptions in the JDP, party members expressed opinions that were in line with their party discourse. The JDP party directors support women's economic participation but do not open up the issue of fundamental values to discussion. The implication is that women can work as long as they do not neglect their responsibilities at home.

TABLE 2. Perceptions Of Women's Economic Participation From Interviews

	JDP		RPP	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Openly against women's economic participation	1	0	0	0
Perceive some negatives to women's economic participation ¹	6	0	0	0
Mention problems women confront both at home and at work	5	11	10	15
Number of interviews	12	16	10	15

(*) Here are explanations that appear in this group: When women work, children get harmed; when women work, they become capricious at home; mixed gender settings could create atmospheres facilitating adultery; women's nature pushes them to get married and have children; women are unhappy in the economic sphere.

Both the JDP and the RPP members believe that women have difficulties participating in the economic sphere primarily because of the social expectations placed on women. The opinions expressed by the female JDP members on the issue more closely resemble those of the RPP members than those of the male members of their own party, and this is not a situation unique to Turkey. For instance, in the U.S., regarding the abortion issue, republican women's opinions tend to be more liberal than those of the republican men (Berkman & O'Connor, 1993: 110. See also Erickson 1997: 663-688). Female politicians' position on the issues such as abortion, rape, conjugal violence and equal opportunity are, broadly speaking, positioned left of those of male politicians (Erickson, 1997: 667). Furthermore, conservative women's views on gender-related issues in general tend to be more progressive than those of male members of their own parties (Carroll, 2001). This *gender gap* exists in Turkey as well. However, the seeming universality of the *gender gap* does not justify the difficulties women confront in overcoming their party discourse (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995).

CONCLUSION

Regarding women's economic participation, the content of the JDP and the RPP programs are not much different from one another. The two parties support women's work and promise more or less the same elements to voters. Not surprisingly, we observe ideological differences rather in the declarations and perspectives of the politicians. Regarding the declarations appearing on the dailies, we notice that the RPP mentions more about women's political participation than economic participation. This may be explainable by the mindsets of their voter bases. It is natural among the RPP voters that women work. Therefore, party members may not need to make explicit mention of the issue. JDP voters tend to be more conservative. For them, women's work is still sometimes difficult to accept. This may thus be the reason the issue is frequently mentioned in their declarations. Furthermore, the male JDP members seem to be the most conservative among all the interviewees. For instance, they interrogate themselves on whether, or under what conditions, women should work. Some believe that marriage and children are in women's nature, that working women and their children are unhappy, or that mixed working atmospheres result in social degeneration. No RPP members expressed opinions against women's economic participation, neither did any the female members of the JDP. Our data supports the existing literature which argues that women in right-wing parties adopt more egalitarian values on gender related issues than the men of their own parties.

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