

THE CONCEPTS OF EMPOWERING WOMEN IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

Over the last few years, Women's Empowerment has grown significantly in the development stages. Those who are advocates have been very successful at drawing much-needed attention and are committed to increasing financial backing for the cause. The development of empowering women has not only grown by leaps and bounds but has drawn the attention of many philanthropic people in major businesses thanks to the enormous promotional efforts on the part of many organizations. Whether it is an ideology or something else, everyone has their own thoughts on how it should work. That said, there are many feminists and gender equality activists that are still not happy with the term empowering women. Many of these people are very uneasy at the way it is being promoted by those who are very enthusiastic. Achieving success in entrepreneurship may be quite difficult for women if they do not make adequate effort towards overcoming the challenges they encounter during their entrepreneurial endeavors. This paper therefore looks into women entrepreneurs, the challenges they encounter and suggestions at to how their successes can be further increased. It is based on the review and analysis of available secondary information sources on the topic and other areas relevant in the understanding and advancement of research propositions on Turkish entrepreneurial and cultural relationship. These secondary sources include country-specific reports, policy documents and documentations from firms.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Education, Political Participation, Violence.

INTRODUCTION

The Perception behind Empowerment

The perception behind empowerment has taken hold by the rise and promotional efforts of mainstream development institutions that echo the rebirth of the Women in Development approach that has been conducted by liberal feminists who want the industry to pay more attention to women. The ongoing promises of helping families and communities rise out of poverty are associated with the image of women being hardworking, peaceful, caring, and inherently virtuous. Mainstream development has managed to package up all the typical myths surrounding women and believe these images are a winning solution for one and all. By reflecting a positive light on women's empowerment makes the entire subject more palatable to a broader base of hard talking gender equality groups. Conservatives applaud the idea of showing women as the custodians of the family. They are also revered through their own efforts for enriching their communities and societies. The new generation of philanthropic thinkers

focuses on women as entrepreneurs while marketing educated girls as hope for the future.

Adding to the mix, there are many feminists and gender equality advocates who are 100% behind development agencies that are driving more attention, as well as resources, toward women. According to Batliwala (2007), the concept that others are concerned by the apparent lack of concern which started with a fundamental suggestion to get women to change the structures of inequalities beyond sugar coated promises. In the eyes of many feminists, the empowerment of women symbolizes a sad story of how a once-radical idea was taken by liberals and shoved onto women as their only salvation.

In contrast to primitive ideas that empowerment is transformation through collective actions and mobilization, the term empowerment is a modified form of liberalism favoring capitalism that sells all the gender myths to uphold the image that good women are deserving of development assistance. Keep in mind, the unrest of the acknowledgment of women has become a different form of acceptability or even the importance that at one time was hardly even considered an issue. Some of those issues included violence against women, the lack of equality for women owning land, no access to credit, and no representation among political institutions. Development's response to the acknowledgment of women has created intense frustration and anger and is often reflected in their actions. Their reactions toward women are in complete contrast to the uncaring attitude associated with gender equality (Molyneux, 2004). Discussions surrounding empowering women (and girls) produce even more questions about how to make empowerment happen. There are organizations that do believe that by empowering women will give a country much needed economic prosperity. It's a conceivable concept that by investing in women can improve an entire community as women; in general, contribute 90% of their earnings into their families in comparison to 30% to 40% by men (Gender and Development Network, 2011).

In 2015, statistics showed that nationally, there was an increase in women being educated throughout Turkey. That was about the same as the increase in the Gross Domestic Product per capita, which is approximately 4% (Gender Gap Report, 2015). Unfortunately, in too many cases, actions taken to create empowerment through a greater range of income opportunities is based on the conception that in order to entice women to reach for entrepreneurship is only based on their political and social freedoms (Berkovitch & Kemp, 2011).

It is therefore important to investigate the different points through which Turkish women can access businesses based on their roles in economic development. This is because the economy stands to benefit from this investigation as entrepreneurship determines the growth of any economy to a large extent. These growths stems from the provision of new jobs, products and services by entrepreneurs. As a result of the few studies carried out on female entrepreneurs in Turkey, this study seeks to focus on the effects of education, culture and financial accessibility on female entrepreneurship. This study also focuses specifically on the opportunities and challenges confronting women in entrepreneurship. In 2017, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitors reported that Turkish individuals exhibit the highest perception of opportunities, required skills and intentions towards entrepreneurship.

The study analyses empowerment of women with its social, political and economic including domestic violence they face, access to financial assistance and limited opportunities to education. Therefore, women's empowerment in economic, political and social life was assessed through three measures: involvement in decisions on woman's own education, involvement in decisions on political representation, and involvement in decisions on being in the labor market.

Using policies and practises, women's socioeconomic characteristics are tried to analyze by each of the three outcome variables of decision-making. Special emphasis will be given to policy forces that are of vital importance in measuring the impact of education and political participation to foster the empowerment of women in Turkey.

Changes to the Educational System

As of late, education in Turkey has gone through many profound changes. Their 4+4+4 system has been drastically changed regarding the structure, the length of time for education, and the basic educational essentials needed. Another significant change has been the introduction of the TEOG exam, which decides the transition into high school with newer subjects. This has led to the shutdown of university preparation centers. Implementing new rules has also changed the hiring of both teachers and directors.

Recently, many of these adjustments are followed by valuable advancements and discussions including those that address electives on Religion and Values and older subjects including classes for their religious culture and their moralities or through discussions on the subject of the Imam-Hatip High Schools. Adding to the mix is the controversy surrounding the separation of girls and boys in education, which does nothing more than fuel concerns about sexism in the classroom. There should be a closer look at various policies that have been adapted over the past few years and the possible impact they might have in light of the constant struggles that are against discrimination. The two leading issues are gender equality in education along with religion.

There were a number of debates that arose during the 19th National Education Council including ending mixed-gender education. This topic requires everyone to discuss in length a tendency that is already present in the country. Clearing it up, in Turkey, there are schools that are exclusively for girls when they enter junior high and there are those that understand how critical these schools are critical for the scholarization of girls. This perception is clearly laid out in the Ministry of Education's bulletins 2010/38 and 2014/8. Bulletin 2010/38 started a campaign that strongly encouraged increased academic improvement for girls in the fields of technology and other vocational areas in order for girls to have access to better levels of education. The other bulletin stated that all girls' schools should be set up to "*Increase the rate of scholarization among girls*". Adding to that, Imam-Hatip schools are now picking up the gauntlet as well. Arguing the point, another study in 2011 does not believe the benefits of girls' technical and vocational schools will give girls the opportunity to a higher quality of education and future careers while providing gender equality for future improvements within society. This study also stated that out of the four fields that girls are studying, only Informational Technologies is the only new subject being offered to them. The other subjects are pretty much the same offered to girls in the past. They are considered programs that will not in any way challenge the standard gender roles.

Some policies that suggests that an increase in all-girl schools will make it easier for families to send them to school. This concept needs further research. First and foremost, currently, there are no discussions regarding all girls schools in the area of enrollment, progression, graduation or how they can move on to higher levels of education. Increasing the number of these schools must be reviewed further. In light of their findings, only basic consideration will be given as a conditional, temporary solution. As addressed in the Education Monitoring Report of 2013 that was issued by the ERG, in paraphrasing, the increased number of boys and girls receiving education in separate environments along with the poor attitudes of

teachers will only continue the gender inequality content being provided. This will only lead to the hardening of any progression for gender roles and not provide the much needed challenges for education (Education Monitoring Report of 2013).

There must be further discussion regarding education and how it will add benefits to women and advancements in their social standings. Discussions must also cover how teachers, schools and the curriculum can be more understanding regarding gender. The Ministry of Education has issued a project that will support gender equality in schools, which is an important initiative that should be monitored. What has been continually overlooked is what children have experienced in the lack of support and their overall education for critical thinking in the school environment. Like past governments, this government does not consider education a field that will strengthen and liberate individuals but instead it's an avenue for future generations to understand the values that lie within their own views. In Conclusion—Gender Equality should not be viewed as a slogan or a logo but instead a social and economic situation. Gender Equality is a fundamental right as outlined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The economic empowerment of women must include their ability in equal participation in making decisions and involvement in their political life is essential. The gender equality laws have changed over the years in Turkey. Newer laws are aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination brought against women and to ensure that equal opportunities are the same for both men and women.

In spite of all these new efforts, there are many challenges for ensuring complete and total gender equality that still exists in the country. Women's rights are a very important part of the fundamental human rights and the overall democratic process within any country. Also, women's rights are critical to Turkey's acceptance in the European Union. Non-governmental organizations and Turkish officials must find new strategies to empower women, stop all violence against women, reach out and support women entrepreneurs, increase the participation of women in the workforce, increase their employment, and allow them total access to higher education.

Greater Access to the Workforce

Statistics have clearly shown there is little to no room for further discussion regarding women in the workforce. Companies in all fields that have the highest numbers of women on their boards will significantly and constantly outperform those companies that do not have female representation. Also, companies with diverse workforces will always perform much better.

Turkey needs to step up to the plate and be a part of the modern world. The main reason women stay in the shadows in almost all fields is due to the country's traditional actions and their strong prejudices. By culture, women have been protected from the day they were born. Motherhood is more of a feeling that is continually brought to the front of the line. Most women in Turkey are struggling to get to the place they deserve both in public and in the workforce. Unfortunately, they are not able to find representation in either politics or business in spite of their rate of population and participation. According to information produced in 2017, the participation rate of women in the workforce in Turkey is approximately 32.6% and it's believed the main reason is not being able to become involved in the workplace due to their household chores, which is a shocking 60.4% (TUIK, 2017).

Over the past 10 years, many businesses have started to realize the many advantages of gender balance. There have been many studies that have clearly shown over and over that gender

balance is good for increased talent, culture, innovation, leadership, and better performance. Unfortunately, growing consensus on gender equality or balance, in the business world is far from an easy step or finding a quick fix. Keeping and promoting women in the workforce is still an ongoing challenge. What many people don't understand, in this day and age, businesses have a lot more work that must be done. By reaching out to providing equal pay for equal jobs, balanced shortlists, developing maternity and paternity support, and creating and mentoring programs, they must meet the challenges head-on. There is a wonderful opportunity for businesses it's the Sustainable Development Goals. This allows for gender equality and empowers all women and girls. It spreads throughout all other goals and is a critical step for economic growth and the greatest weapon for ending poverty by 2030.

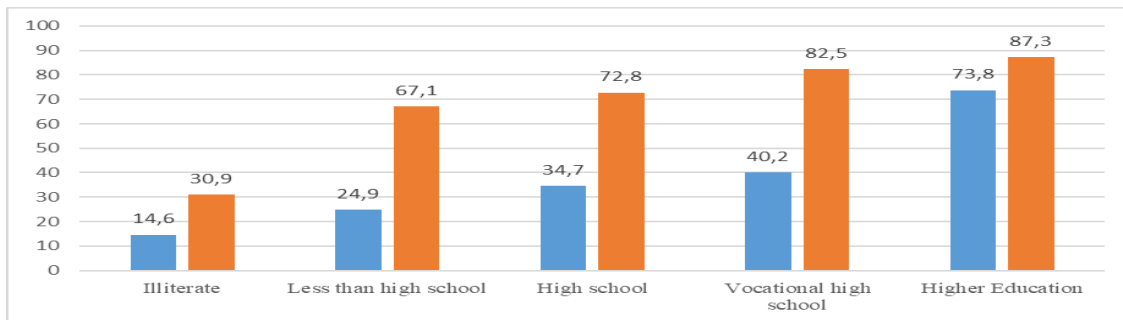


FIGURE 1
THE PARTICIPATION RATE IN THE WORKFORCE AS OF 2017

As shown in Figure 1 above, the gap that exists between men and women is really large but can become smaller with an increase in higher education. It is very strongly believed that more and more women will enter the workforce if they have access to a higher education. It's only common sense that allowing women to participate on an equal basis in economic and social lives along with equal access to education, rights to land, financial opportunities, and training will have a very positive impact on all other goals. By not doing so, will put other goals at risk and there will be no positive impacts economically or socially. If and when Turkey empowers women, there will be many benefits in society and create incredible growth and the country will continue to thrive. According to the UN Foundation, women will give approximately 90% of their income to their families while men will only offer 30 to 40%.

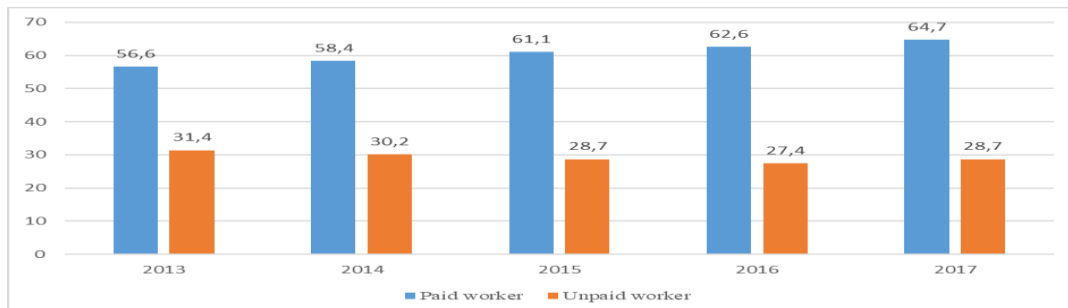


FIGURE 2
SHARING IN EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Unfortunately, the number of women working as unpaid is way too high as seen in Figure 2. If women were granted the right to share in the same roles as men and paid the same as men, there would be greater opportunities as paid workers. Sadly, there are so many existing barriers against women actively participating in the economy and not being allowed to reach their full potential. In some cases, empowering women begins with making their lives easier to deal with and unloading unnecessary burdens. With new regulations for empowering women can allow rural women the opportunity to become entrepreneurs by distributing goods in hard to reach rural communities. Having the right training in basic accounting, developing selling skills, knowledge of health and hygiene and IT skills. Over 500 women entrepreneurs can get more knowledge and eventually start their own businesses. There are public commitments and training programs available to encourage women but this is only the start. When discussing current trends, shockingly, it will be around 2096 before women will have the same economic opportunities as men. Bottom line, that's just wrong! Everyone must do more to speed up this process. It's not just about empowering women and girls; it's about doing the right thing. It is developing a clear vision of a world that is poverty-free and that depends on everyone's mindset. That mindset is exactly what Turkey should be striving for in the here and now, not 70 or 80 years from now!

Being a Part of Political Participation

Women's participation in the political arena seems even further behind than in the business environment. In 2016, the rate of a female deputy was 14.73% and there are only 2 minister positions, the Minister of Family and Social Policies and the Minister of Environment and Urbanization (Başbakanlık, 2016). It seems very clear that women's participation and representation in business, as well as politics, is totally inadequate in the country. The major changes for women having equal rights within the same fields as men are due to the Proclamation of the Republic. Since then, women have gained political, social, and economic rights thanks to the Proclamation of the Republic and have significantly grown since 1923 (Negiz & Üçer, 2012).

Statistics Regarding Women's Participation in Political Life

In 1923, women first moved forward participating in political life and achieving the role of deputy. Also, in 1923, there was a shove to establish the Kadınlar Halk Fırkası party under the leadership of Nezihe Muhittin who presented it to the government. Unfortunately, the government did not accept the party so instead was turned into the Turkish Women's Union in 1924 (Toprak, 1994). In turn, this was a major impact on women for a number of years to follow who simply wanted the same equal rights as men. Women who were 18 years or older did have the right to vote and able to run for office which was regulated by the Municipal Law of 1930, No. 1580. As of 1933, changes were made to the 1924 Village law numbers 20 and 25 Women could vote and run for election but were only allowed to by those in charges or through the elderly council. In December 1934, the legal rights of women were finally recognized in legislative elections (Talış, 1996). Turkey became the first country to give women the right to vote and stand for election during the local elections in 1930 and general elections in 1934 (Şahin, 2011). This led to 18 women deputies entering the National assembly of Turkey for the first time, resulting from the elections in 1935. In 1950, saw the election of the first woman City Manager and then in 1971, Turkey saw their first female Minister. Also, in 1993, finally and most importantly, the first woman Prime Minister was elected (TÜSİAD-KAGİDER, 2008). In 1935, the percentage of

women in Parliament was approximately 4.5%. That number raised to 9% in 2007, and then rose to 14% in 2011 (Gençkaya, 2014). According to the general election, in 2015, there were 82 elected women deputies and 469 elected male deputies out of a total of 550 positions in Parliament (TBMM, 2016).

Limited Opportunities for Women

Women are faced with limited opportunities in the political arena but are active in women's branches of the political parties. Various studies performed have revealed that women are not effective in social or political positions within women's branches and are unable to reach effective political actions (Altındal, 2007; Çakır, 2001; Yaraman, 1998). Political parties were observed without taking into consideration ideological differences but gender-based business divisions are maintained and women seem to put their parties' identities first over their own personal identities. It seems that women working in political positions believe that simply being a symbol within the political area is more than enough. They do not participate in any decisions being made regarding any subject or make any decisions without permission from their political parties but will apply all decisions made by the party (Çakır, 2001). It has also been shown that their situations are not any different from levels shown in national politics including local and government politics. Unfortunately, studies have shown that Turkey in regards to women participation in local government is one of the worst in the world and at an all-time low.

However, women's participation in local politics in Turkey seems to be quite opposite to other areas of the world. In many countries, women fail at reaching significant levels of representation within national politics but are rather successful within local political decisions. These findings clearly show this is the opposite in Turkey (TÜSİAD-KAGİDER, 2008; Alkan, 2004). The reasons behind the negative representation of women in the Turkish political systems seem to be the traditional structure that influences representation. Other reasons include the exclusion and lack of financial assets, technical data, the formation of the political parties, and how candidates are determined. Many obstacles facing women in local politics include a serious lack of confidence and many internal struggles (Negiz & Üçer, 2012). Being able to participate in making decisions for security and peace are both effective and very important avenues for women gaining their own empowerment. Creating empowerment, equality, and rights for both men and women are extremely important for fostering inclusive peacebuilding strategies. Having a commitment to rights and gender equality is the foundation for intelligent and cultural strategies of empowerment. It is crucial for supporting human rights, supporting women's rights, and building a solid base for gender equality for a peaceful future. Also, new legal reforms are important actions to gain empower communities and are elementary for transformative agencies.

It is very important to increase women's roles in society and be involved in making decisions within the political arena, either locally, regionally, or nationally. The constitution of Turkey implements equality between men and women. There are many other reforms that must take place for practicing principles and will comply with the *Acquis Communautaire* from top to bottom. The *Acquis Communautaire* is the body of the European Union laws and obligations since 1958. The EU consists of treaties, laws, declarations, international agreements, resolutions, and the judgments of the Court of Justice. Adopted by the European Commission in 2006, the progress report has been deemed satisfactory. Revisions must be made to the Labor, and Penal codes along with the laws regarding municipalities. There must be other regulations that will protect and promote women's rights. Also, there must be regulations implemented within the workforce that covers parental leave, equality in pay, and have the same access to social security

and employment opportunities

Implementing these rules and regulations is the real challenge. Having complete respect for women's rights is still proving to be a serious problem, especially in rural and poor regions within the country. Women are still extremely vulnerable to discrimination, which is decidedly due to low levels of education and high levels of illiteracy. It is fundamental to get beyond the gender issues in both training and educating. Increasing a woman's level of education and developing needed skills is important for both right now but also for future generations of women in order to have the skills needed to enter the workforce.

The Critical Issues of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence against women still remains a big problem across many areas of in Europe and Turkey happens to be on that list. Honor killings have become a serious problem in certain areas of the country. In 2006, reports were submitted by the Parliamentary Committee regarding honor crimes and other violent actions taken against women and clearly laid out these issues and offered recommendations. A report was issued by the Prime Minister regarding steps needed to prevent violence against women as well as children in the name of honor killings. The report was released in 2006 providing for priority steps to take place. The report went on to say that it's essential to improve and strengthen administrative actions. This is still a serious issue due to the lack of staff. When addressing the Equality Body that is required, it still remains unshakable. There have been initiatives and measures in place including the initiative created offer young men in the military with education on the preventions of violent actions against women. It also addresses the inclusion of information regarding women's right for those attending police academies. There are many other efforts that must be weighed to prevent all forms of violence against women in every way possible.

Women Having Access to Financial Assistance

During the negotiations for women's access to financial assistance, the European Commission is totally supportive of the efforts and reforms being made throughout Turkey. There are many undertakings that have benefited from the EU by addressing the situation of women getting financial assistance. The Commission has committed their support for strengthening the abilities of the Directorate General for women and boost exchanges for the best alternatives to expedite incorporating gender issues into policies and the advancement of gender equality legislation with participation from local and central authorities as well as non-governmental organizations. Through these policies implemented in legislation, other assistance has been offered to various associations to improve communications between women and organizations along with local government assistance to create greater cooperation for improving women's rights. There are many dedicated activities that are fighting against violence by increasing public awareness about domestic violence and offering continual counseling centers and shelters for these women. There is a great deal of support being offered to reduce gender imbalance in education and promoting girls' level of knowledge. Other programs are in place to support women entrepreneurs through training and consultations, which also includes the newly developed Business Development Center in Istanbul. Improving the economics for women in Turkey has been the focus of various actions to encourage small businesses that women are active in. In many areas, that is assisting to help increase the vocational and entrepreneurial skills of women in the arts such as Antep embroidery, designing jewelry, and making gift boxes.

The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, or IPA, is a funding system for the EU and replaced other programs in 2007. It provides the support for important projects in strengthening administrative skills and the improvement in human resources. Turkey must implement appropriate format and adopt good operational practices immediately. The European Commission will stay active to help women become the beneficiaries of many future projects. There are member states can contribute valuable advice to Turkey and exchange procedures for different industries and adopt a good welfare system. This will allow women to face the challenges that lay ahead through various community services and programs, regarding gender issues to help Turkey gain experience to apply *Acquis Communautaire*. At this point and time, there is a great deal of participation in new programs to improve social unity and employment.

Investments in Women's Economic Empowerment

Investing in women's economic acceptance is crucial along with important steps toward helping women's participation in the Turkish economy as women's involvement in the workforce is a great deal lower (36%) than the average numbers in the European Union at 86.8%. In 2016, the percentage of women employed was approximately 30.6% which was actually up by 1.1% from 2015. The bottom line, women unemployment is still much higher compared to men in the country. Statistics show that most women are employed in the field of agriculture and are given very low incomes. In many cases, unpaid jobs which are approximately one-third of the female population are looking for employment (TUIK, 2017). Turkey's responsibility is to encourage more women coming into the workforce and receiving well paid professional jobs as well as good working terms that will meet the regulations of the International Labor Organization and the European Union. This is probably the only way to correct and improve conditions now exist. Turkey must embrace change to help women overcome many barriers they are up against and improve their economic flexibility. The country must promote a better form of income for financial and non-financial benefits. One of the best ways to encourage a better financial income is through women entrepreneur, providing credit facilities to these women, providing higher educational resources, and vocational training.

In order to move women into the private sector, there must be repairs to the gap between skills that are being taught and practical skills that are greatly needed. There must be equal access to quality education for women while promoting educational skills for women in the fields of science and technology at the universities and other institutions of knowledge. There must be other programs for women and the promotion of private enterprises to dispatch many more training programs. Turkey must encourage programs that are in the private sector and provide foundations to invest in new career opportunities and training that are in place to help women improve their skills. Again, these new careers for keeping women in the workforce should include science, technology, and innovation.

Implementing Better Policies

Without a doubt, women are facing more challenges in the business world and as professionals. Implementing better policies on gender equality with close monitoring capabilities within a company is another excellent option for closing the gender gap. There must be effective steps taken to stop the prevalence of gender discrimination during recruiting or when promoting workers. One solution to this problem is offered by the government to businesses to pay a share of women's social security benefits for 54 months if used after being

unemployed for more than 6 months. The Turkish Employment Agency has been offering women training for various fields of employment including computer skills and knowledge in sales. Some of the policies in place have increased the rate of women entering the workforce and even though the percentages are still pretty low, the numbers are growing. Between 2004 and 2012, the 2013 Turkish Statistical Institute reported that the percentages rose from 23.8% to 29.5%. Establishing new fields of employment that are being created should be available for women by incorporating active employment policies that will decrease unemployment. A good plan must be drawn up in a timely manner and associated institutions should be funded on monetary terms and human resources for an effective and efficient implementation of equality policies that can be decided on. The private and public institution must create active systems that will not allow women gender-based discrimination that exist in certain areas. Policies should be in place for areas including employment, promotions, and training to boost gender equality.

The Labor Code should have good labor relationships that clearly define proper engagement to prevent discrimination during the recruiting stage. There should also be greater improvement in pre-school education and increase enrollment rates to help women enter the workforce by offering good childcare services. Women who are economically empowered are very important for the growth of the country. Women who have fewer children are more likely to be compared to men because they will defy the norms of society and look for equal opportunities in education for their daughters and sons. Turkey will discover greater improvements within the country if they allow women the same rights to education as men. The bottom line, if women are not entrusted with economic growth, Turkey will continue having many problems evolving around inequality and poverty.

CONCLUSION

When empowerment is combined with equality and rights, there will be greater prosperity. When both women and men are able to challenge the status quo, there will be fewer inequalities, injustices, and the suppression of rights, which will lead to a much better social and political platform. A positive transformation within a society is more likely to take place when women are working together to solve common issues. By promoting women's right and their human rights, creating a strong society based on gender equality, and implementing new reforms, will allow both genders to work together. The gender gap in society does nothing but create barriers that are against women participating in social life and their legal rights. There are many campaigns, training programs, and many other ways of creating awareness including visual media that will help people understand the importance of human rights and for changing public opinion.

Turkey has spent many years trying to identify issues surrounding education, health, violence, and being a part of the workforce. These programs are established to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment. Policies and laws are now in place that is top priorities to the Turkish government if they want to be an important player in the EU. Rethinking and improving various strategies will be needed if empowerment of women will become possible for further security for all women within the country. It's important to understand that it takes all parties getting involved to achieve goals that will target gender gaps and bring about gender equality. Participating parties include universities, government, and non-government organizations, public institutions and organizations. Turkey and international organizations have played a major role within the country. Recently, focusing just on women is no longer the case. There must be a focus on men, as well, in order to change old traditions and bring greater

prosperity to the country.

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